

Growing Up Somali in Britain

**The experience of a group of young Somali men and women coming of
age in London, and their parents**

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Abstract

This study tells the story of Britain's single largest group of refugee children – the children of Somali refugees – as they have experienced growing up amidst marginal working class communities and inner-city neighbourhoods. It focuses on the major themes in the lives of these children and their families and the challenges confronting them in terms of adjustment to a new society, family and school life, education, employment, identity, goals, and aspirations (see Rumbaut & Portes 2001:12). In addition to data gathered through qualitative interviewing in London in two different time periods over a decade apart, the study pulls together existing research that bears directly or indirectly on children's immigrant experiences and adaptational outcomes in both the U.S. and the UK. On the whole, it is suggested that the environments created by a combination of immigrant's human and social capital and the context that receives them dominate the process of adaptation and its prospects for success. There is much evidence in this research to support the assertion that 'family resources, family strategies, and parental expectations' are significant factors in the success of immigrant young people. Where that was weak or nonexistent, some of the young people concerned could not escape from the external challenges that confronted them in schools and neighbourhoods. A few of them fell prey to a social context that promoted a set of undesirable outcomes such as dropping out of school, joining youth gangs, and using and selling drugs. As Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (2001) found out elsewhere, a tentative explanation from this research is that there is a patterned sequence of adaptation conditioned by predictable social forces: refugee human and social capital, first, and opportunities and barriers in the host society, second. These sets of factors play themselves out over time conditioning the adaptation of first generation immigrants, and the academic performance and career horizons of their offspring (*ibid.*). The background of war, flight and exile also continue to influence the lives of these children and their families.

Declaration and Word Count

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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I have always cherished the idea that education and learning was a life-long process, too precious to be the exclusive domain of the young. So older but perhaps wiser, I restarted my course in 2004; this time, self-financing my studies. By then, an academic debate has already emerged about the future the children of today's many immigrants and refugees face; and this is where my current research lies. More than seventeen years after my initial registration for MPhil/PhD and seven years after my re-registration in 2004, I have now finally finished this latter project.

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I must mention here that my own interest in the experience of refugees from Somalia stems from very personal issues. I am a refugee from Somalia myself, and brought up my own children in the UK. The topic for this research, therefore, meshes intimately with my deepest professional, personal and social commitments. And it is this story that largely determines the theoretical and philosophical approach I adopt in this study. The moving stories my participants share with us resonate deeply with me as a fellow refugee. I trust and hope that I have done justice to the lessons they have taught me in this research.

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Part I: Foundations

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The chapters in this thesis offer the reader a wealth of information on the lives of a group of Somali young people as they have experienced growing up amidst marginal working class communities and inner-city neighbourhoods in London. So far research in this community has remained focused on adult refugees whose experience was viewed as a continuum of violence, flight and exile (Van der Veer 1998; Ager 1999; Haines 1996, 2007). These adults' experience was also defined in terms of acculturation stresses, language barriers, and encounters with prejudice, discrimination, and barriers to employment (e.g., Bloch & Levy 1999; Bloch 2002, 2004, 2009; Griffiths 2002; Woods 2004; Harris 2004; Change Institute 2009).

Yet our understanding of the experiences of their children and youth remains limited (see Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova 2008:1). This gap in our knowledge is troubling because the children of Somali refugees are increasingly visible in streets, schools, colleges, and neighbourhoods across Britain.¹ Their presence is not only an urban phenomenon - schools across the country are encountering large numbers of asylum seeking and refugee children (Office for Standards in Education 2003; Remsbery 2003; Save the Children 2004; Appa 2005), of whom the Somalis are one of the most prominent groups.

Thus sheer numbers plus the concentration of these children in inner city areas where they 'experience social and economic disadvantage' (Robinson & Reeve 2006:1) are sufficient reasons to assign significance to its study. Their

numbers alone will ensure that the process of their adjustment will have a profound societal impact, although it is too early to draw firm conclusions from the forms of social and economic adaptation experienced by this young population or to predict with accuracy their probable trajectories of incorporation (see Rumbaut & Portes 2001:7).

Another reason to study the children of Somali refugees involves 'the future of the integration of ethnic and religious minorities in Britain' (Bertossi 2007:7). British society is becoming ever more diverse, partly in terms of ethnicity and country of origin (e.g., Vertovec 2007; Kennedy-Dubourdieu 2006, chap 4). The passage to adulthood, for many children from these new communities, involves growing up as 'ethnic minorities *in a context of diversity and disadvantage* (my italics)' (Modood, Berthoud *et al.*, 1997; Pilkington 2003; Mason 2003; Modood 2005a; Tienda 2005). Some of these ethnic minority groups will have achieved levels of prosperity similar to those of the white population, but others continue to experience disproportionate [levels of] unemployment and poverty (Modood & Berthoud *et al.*, 1997). Their unequal modes of incorporation reflect fundamentally different starting points, contexts of reception, and attendant definitions of the situation (Rumbaut & Portes 2001:4).

The unique histories, culture, and immigration contexts of each group need to be understood (see Telles & Ortiz 2008:12), and this is especially true for the Somalis. Having fled from a country devastated by wars and internecine conflicts (Peterson 2000), they have experienced contexts of exit far more traumatic than practically any other newcomers in recent times, and have simply no realistic prospect of return to their homeland (see A Legacy of War, next section).

Hence, Somalis were given refugee status since they began arriving in large numbers in the 1990s. True, that makes them a 'new immigrant community' (see Robinson & Reeve 2005; Berkeley *et al.*, 2005; Kyambi 2005), but they are also 'dark-skinned migrants' (Muir 2010) who happen to

be 'Muslims by religion' (see Change Institute 2009). We need to understand 'their dynamics of inclusion or exclusion' (Vertovec 2007:17), and we particularly need to focus on the younger generation. This is because whereas 'adult immigrants have a point of reference in the country they left behind and, if they are unsuccessful, can go back' (see Portes & Rumbaut 2001:17), their children are growing up as members of 'Britain's racialized minorities' ² (Benson 1996; Knowles 1999; Kalra 2006; Virdee 2010), and the vast majority of them are here to stay. Their common point of reference is life in this country, and their relative educational and economic achievements *or lack thereof* (my italics) will set the course of these young people for the long term (see Portes & Rumbaut 2001:18).

Finally, echoing Kasinitz et al. (2008:4), we need to study these children because their parents worry about what will happen to them growing up in the UK. A major theme consistently present in most parents' conversations in this research was the fear of losing their children to the street. While researchers cannot unquestionably accept the views of the parents as presented above, we should nevertheless take their concerns seriously (ibid.).

A majority of the parents I interviewed were preoccupied with fear of external influences on their children. Some were getting worried about whether they could keep their children away from becoming involved with the wrong crowd of peers. Others saw the children in the inner city areas where they lived as unruly, undisciplined, and often frightening examples of what happens when kids get too much freedom (compare Waters 1999). Still others criticized what they saw was an atmosphere of permissiveness in schools where teachers were either unable or unwilling to discipline unruly youngsters. One of these latter parents was Muumin, who had this to say:

"In my culture, apart from the home and the society - in terms of inculcating the child in what is right and wrong, it was the school that created decent values in the children. The children used to be afraid of the teacher and avoided all kinds of bad behaviours in his presence, both inside and outside the classroom. In here, whereas we wanted the pupil to gain decency, and respectability, and progress, they gain the

opposite: they come with impoliteness.... Thus all of these things made me worry about the future of my children.”

Muumin, father working as security guard & living with wife and children in the London Borough of Haringey, arrived in the UK in 1990.

Sometimes this is only a vague but nagging fear about cultural loss among people who are otherwise quite happy in their host country (see Kasinitz et al. 2008:5). In my research, for instance, the concerned parents feared their children acculturating to a different value system; hence losing parental authority over them (compare Stanton-Salazar 2001). Whether the experience of the Somali young men and women I have studied in London justifies these fears or not is one of the most important questions which I hope this thesis will be able to answer.

A background of disadvantage

In this introductory chapter, I provide a general background to ‘the context of exit and the context of arrival’ (Pedraza & Rumbaut 1996) of Somali refugees. In order to understand the present-day circumstances of the younger generation, according to Zhou & Bankston (1998:24), it is important to look back to the recent past. I therefore briefly outline the historical and sociopolitical processes that led to refugee flight from Somalia in the next section. This will be followed by a quick survey of the challenges that confronted the Somali community as they arrived in the UK. My argument here is that the Somali community faces multiple disadvantages in Britain, first because of their status as refugees and asylum seekers, second as ‘dark-skinned migrants’, they also have to contend with ethnic minority disadvantage, and third: Somalis face disadvantage because of their religious background as Muslims. I then introduce the background to the study, including the main research questions to be followed by a brief description of the terms and concepts used in the thesis. And finally, I present an overview of the chapters.

A Legacy of War Somali Refugees in Historical Perspective

“Nin walbow naftaa;
 Nabiow ummaddaa.”
 “Everyone for himself;
 The prophet for his followers”
 - Somali Saying

The phrase “everyone for himself” perhaps comes closest to capturing the sense in which the Somali people responded to, and survived, a series of cataclysmic horrors which forced them out of their homeland in recent years (see Chan 2004:1). When the collectivity was no more or rather became dysfunctional, everyone (literally everyone who could) acted to save his skin and those nearest and dearest to them. The phrase also captures the ability of the Somalis to somehow endure these tragedies and continue to survive to this day. Indeed, survival can be said to be a leitmotif of Somali history. Despite the unremitting assaults on their autonomy, the Somali people - both inside and outside their country - have managed to survive and recreate. That resiliency is a testament to the strength of the Somali people, but not to their government.

Somalia has been without a central government since the collapse of a decades-old military dictatorship in 1991. The bloody civil war that followed utterly destroyed what national governance structures remained, dividing Somalia into a patchwork of clan fiefdoms (Bruton 2010:6). Over a dozen national peace conferences have been convened since 1991. A U.N. peacekeeping operation failed disastrously in 1993-94 (Rutherford 2008).

Meanwhile, bitter clan fighting wrought death and destruction on an unprecedented scale (UNDP 2001). That fighting particularly laid waste to the agricultural regions in southern Somalia which were the country’s breadbasket, killing and terrorizing the less aggressive cultivators (Besteman & Cassanelli 1996; Besteman 1999). With agricultural and livestock production devastated, famine spread, especially in the

interriverine areas of southern Somalia. The U.N. estimated that as many as 300,000 people perished from famine, and about a million sought refuge in Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, Europe, Scandinavia and North America (Lewis 2002:264-5). There was also considerable internal displacement. According to the United Nations, by 2001 around 300,000 people were still internally displaced in Somalia (UNDP 2001).

In 2002 there were 404,700 international refugees from Somalia known to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): the vast majority in neighbouring countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and Djibouti (UNHCR 2004). Substantial numbers of refugees from Somalia also lived in Arab Gulf countries, Egypt, South Africa, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Pakistan and India (See, for instance, Lindley 2005:4). Figures for Somali refugees outside Somalia are so divergent and polar opposites that, it has been suggested, their numbers could range from one million to five million.³ The numbers for the UK alone vary from a low figure of 44,000 people according to the 2001 census (Kyambi 2005:89) to a very high figure of a quarter of a million population (Lewis 2002, cited by Harris 2004:33).

After nearly fifteen years of statelessness and civil strife and two years of tortuous peace negotiations a Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formed in Kenya in October 2004 (the 14th attempt since the breakdown of central authority in 1991). For the first two years of its existence, the TFG effectively remained a government in exile, first in Nairobi, and then in the Somali city of Baidoa (Bruton 2010:7).

In December 2006, Ethiopian forces crossed into Somalia in a war on its Islamist rulers, the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts (SCIC), who controlled most of southern and central Somalia since June 2006. The Ethiopian invasion of Somalia was supported by the US government (Prendergast 2008:4; Bruton 2010:8), on the pretext of stopping an Al-Qaida affiliated Islamist takeover of the region. The United States also launched a series of missile attacks on fleeing SCIC leaders and soldiers. After just nine

days of clashes in Somalia's hinterland, the Islamists abandoned all of the areas they controlled, and their leaders fled across Somalia (See Xan Rice "US launches air strikes at al-Qaida suspects", *Guardian*, Wednesday January 10, 2007).

The TFG subsequently relocated to the capital and a new more brutal phase in the Somali conflict began (Bruton 2010). The Ethiopian intervention has pushed the country's protracted conflict from a simmering regional problem into a full-blown international crisis (Prendergast 2008:4). It has particularly sparked a complex insurgency in Mogadishu. A broad section of Somali society, galvanized by foreign occupation of their country, rallied to support the defeated Islamist forces in their fight against TFG and Ethiopian forces. Several hundred foreign jihadists, including at least one top al-Qaida operative, were also said to have operated alongside these local forces (see Bruton 2010:15). Much of the already war-torn capital city was completely leveled in the fighting, and close to a million Somalis were driven from their homes (Prendergast 2008:5).

In January 2009, Ethiopia withdrew its troops from Mogadishu. Fearing a security vacuum, the international community actively pushed for the creation of AMISOM (The African Union Mission to Somalia) – a peacekeeping mission approved earlier in 2007 by the UN Security Council to provide, among other things, protection to TFG institutions. Uganda deployed the largest contingent of these forces. The removal of Ethiopian troops also led to the merger of one faction of the Islamist movement with the defunct TFG on January 26, 2009, in a new so-called unity government led by a moderate Islamist Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. Even with the inclusion of Islamist leaders, the TFG has failed to generate a broader constituency of supporters in Mogadishu. Its survival now depends wholly on the presence of AMISOM forces, which further reinforces the perception that the TFG is a foreign implant (Bruton 2010:10).

Alas, it could all have been different. Somalia is one of Africa's most homogenous countries (e.g., A. A. Castagno 1964; Potholm 1970; M. Castagno 1975; Cassanelli 1982; Mukhtar 2003). According to Hashim (1997:34), an outside observer would readily acknowledge the singularity of the Somali people for they 'share common customs, origins, history and language' (Morris 1973:874, cited by Samatar 1991:6). Looking at the madness that grips Somalia today, one might conclude, the evidence is otherwise.

As I write (October 2010), Somalia's capital city continues to be ravaged by a bloody insurgency. In *The Fallen State* published more than a decade ago, Alice Bettis Hashim observes: "No specific formula for sharing power, reintegrating the state, nor settling the aggravated internecine strife that has by now become endemic, has emerged" (Hashim 1997:xii). Hashim's statement above appears to hold true for now.

That indeed is the background to refugee flight from Somalia. Like refugees from war zones elsewhere, many of them faced widespread communal violence and social upheaval before flight (Samatar 1994; Tilly 2003; CRD 2004). They also faced the perils posed by the breakdown of law and order (Crisp 2000; Tanner & Steadman 2003). Some will have suffered actual physical attacks, torture, and imprisonment or incarceration in degrading conditions, and the disappearance of relations and family members (Goldfeld, Mollica, and Pesavento 1988; Zolberg *et al.*, 1989; Van der Veer 1998). On a household level, many families would have experienced serious economic hardship as a result of disruption of income-generating activities and/or shortage of food (Green 1994; US Committee for Refugees 2003). In all, the pre-flight phase causes extreme physical suffering and considerable anguish to many refugees (Davis 1992; Allen 1996), including economic and social disruption (Keen 1992, 1998), severe deprivation (Cohen & Deng 1998), and serious violence (Shawcross 2000; Berkeley 2002).

Kunz (1973, 1981) puts forward an explanation of refugee behaviour in terms of what he called 'kinetic models'. He differentiated 'anticipatory refugees' – those with clearer purpose, from 'acute flight' caused by 'perceived [*or real*] threats to life or liberty and coercive political conditions (my italics)'. The distinction is in fact more problematic than it seems in that, according to Richmond (1994:53), "their common denominator is a sense of loss of control over one's own fate". These are not individuals who had chosen their path, '[but] large masses of people torn loose from their society and driven to seek refuge' (Marrus 2002:15). They experience various phases of adversity of differing length and severity, including oppression and violence in the country of origin, displacement within the country of origin, flight and exile to a nearby country, flight and exile to the West (Richman 1998:11). The latter has devoted much thought and considerable resources to stopping refugees reaching their frontiers by any means legal whether by plane, train, ship or lorry (see Cohen 1999). Thus each and every step of refugee 'flight' comes with multiple risks.

The renowned Somali author Nuruddin Farah, on meeting his elderly father and younger sister who just escaped from the fighting in Mogadishu and crossed into Kenya, asked: Why have they fled? To which the father replied: "Mogadiscio has fallen into the clutch of thugs, no better than hyenas, who have no idea what honour is, what trust is, what political responsibility means". The father continued: "We heard fear in the footsteps of those running, and sensed fright in the faster pace of our hearts. I reckon it is wiser to join the masses of people fleeing, and then ask why they were escaping, than to wait, and then be robbed, raped, or left dead by the wayside, unburied. What is the point of remaining in a Mogadiscio emptied of all one's people?" (Farah 2000:3-4). Farah talks of seeing his refugee family as: "Dejected in spirit, emaciated of body after an arduous sea journey in an overcrowded dhow, emptied of wise thoughts by the perils of first joining the displaced, then leaving Somalia and going into exile" (ibid.:2).

Thus refugee passage is riddled with continuing fear for personal safety, as well as uncertainty. Often, thousands upon thousands of people trying to escape by land get stranded across borders in squalid living conditions where they face daily intimidation by armed militia. Others risk their lives, and many thousands die annually, as they try to escape by sea aboard small boats which are often unseaworthy (Pugh 2004).⁴ Women are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse during this phase (Agger 1994; African Rights 1993a; Forbes-Martin 1992; Goldfeld et al., 1988; Mollica et al., 1987).

Such harrowing experiences are true of many Somali refugees who eventually ended up in the UK. The children, at least many of those who took part in this research, thankfully were too young at the time of flight from Somalia to remember their native land. For them, the frightful journeys aboard leaky (and often unseaworthy) boats and months in crowded refugee camps are only stories they have heard from their parents, relatives, and family friends. Yet they all carry the burden of war and exile, and are deeply affected by family histories and stereo-types about their ethnicity in the host country (Compare Zhou 2001).

For those who can remember, however, flight disrupts children's bases of socialization through such structures as families, schools and places of worship (see Ager 1996; Boyden & Berry 2004). According to Ahearn, Loughry, and Ager (1999:217), a child's developing understanding of the world is not only shaped by direct experience, but also mediated through familial and societal structures. Experience mediated through these channels, they contend, guides a child's socialization into the world. Hence disruption of family and societal systems impairs a child's capacity to develop adaptive behavior (*ibid.*).

Still, not all children experience developmental harm or clinical outcomes (Summerfield 2004:8). According to Garbarino et al. (1992), "[Most] children develop a high degree of competence in spite of stressful environments and experiences". The children of Somali refugees are no exception, and

generally adjusted satisfactorily to their new communities and neighbourhoods in Britain.

Context of Arrival

By far the majority of Somalis in the United Kingdom are asylum seekers and refugees or their children who arrived here since the beginning of the 1990s. One constant theme in this thesis is the difficulty of estimating the size and nature of the Somali population in Britain (see Cole & Robinson 2003:10). Estimates vary wildly, ranging from a low figure of nearly 44,000 (as per the 2001 census, see Kyambi 2005:89) to nearly double that figure (Somalia-born estimate of 82,300 by the 2006 Annual Population Survey), to a very high figure of ½ a million people partly based on perceptions of the Somali community itself (Change Institute 2009: 29; see also Holman & Holman 2003; Harris 2004). Together with their British-born children, however, Somalis constituted one of the largest ethnic minorities in Britain at the beginning of the new millennium (Harris 2004:6).

The largest Somali community in the UK is found in London. This community grew bigger in the 1990s as more and more refugees fled the unending civil war in Somalia and trickled into the UK. London is also attractive because of the size of the existing Somali population, the presence of extended family members, and opportunities for 'limitless menial immigrant jobs' (see Waldinger & Lichter 2003). Today there are tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Somalis living in London (see Berns McGown 1999; Holman & Holman 2003; Change Institute 2009). Even though most live in run-down, inner-city areas, their presence, especially the dozens (or possibly hundreds) of small businesses they established, is becoming a magnet that draws Somali refugees from elsewhere in the United Kingdom (and other parts of Europe) through secondary migration.

Outside London, there are significant Somali communities in Leicester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Cardiff, Birmingham, Bolton and Manchester. Recently, other cities such as Newcastle, Bristol, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Hull have seen a rise in numbers (Change Institute 2009:29). In this context, the extraordinary importance of established Muslim communities as a determining factor in the settlement patterns of Somali refugees is best illustrated by the growth of a sizable Somali community in already existing Muslim community areas in these cities. The downside, however, is that many of these towns contain a high representation of the most deprived areas in the Social Exclusion Unit's catalogue, with Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham occupying three of the top five places (Pearl & Zetter 2002:238).

Because they are primarily refugees, any serious consideration of the Somali condition must provide an understanding of how the refugee background shapes their experience (*cf.* Stepick 1982; Freeman 1989; Miyares 1998; Chan 2004). But also because 'Britain is a deeply unequal society' (see Goodman et al., 1997; Keating 2000; Grover 2008; Irvin 2008), the fact of their racial position, as both Muslims and black, is that of a minority group experiencing economic disadvantage (Modood, Berthoud et al., 1997; Runnymede Trust 2000; Mason 2003; Pilkington 2003; Peach 2006).

Members of a minority group are more likely to encounter stigma and stereotypes about prominent features of their culture and body, and face an increased chance of discriminatory treatment in everyday public encounters (Hein 2006:238). Concerning the Somalis in Britain, according to Cole and Robinson (2003:11), 'a most mercurial picture emerges ... whereby multiple disadvantages are reinforced by discrimination and hostility'. Such disadvantages that the Somali community faces as refugees and asylum seekers, as members of BMEs or black and minority ethnics – 'an umbrella term for all non-whites' (Clark, Putnam & Fieldhouse 2010:18), and as Muslims will necessarily condition the course of their children's long-term

adjustment. I now briefly address these three features of disadvantage for the Somali community, one by one.

Somalis as refugees and asylum seekers

Pearl and Zetter (2002:226) sum up the condition of these groups in the UK for us: "Of all the individuals or groups treated harshly by society, refugees and asylum seekers are often amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalised". The Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain [aka Parekh Report] echoed these sentiments when it poignantly observed: "The state's attitude to asylum seekers sends a shiver down many spines" (The Runnymede Trust 2000:10).

Refugees, by definition, according to David Haines - author of all-time classic *Refugees in America in the 1990s*, are triply disadvantaged. First, they have frequently experienced, and continue to bear witness to and suffer from, some of the most tumultuous events of the twentieth century. Second, their exodus involves a rupture of cultural and social relations far more severe than the experience of other immigrants. Loss of relatives and friends and of social context is virtually inevitable. Third, their resettlement lacks the advance preparation and preexisting community structures that are often available to immigrants (Haines 1996:42).

That indeed was the position of the Somalis upon arrival. They lacked a preexisting ethnic community that could provide them with the requisite 'social capital' (Zhou & Bankston 1994; Portes 1998; Waldinger 2005), and 'ethnic niches' (Waldinger 1996; Light & Gold 2000; Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward 2006).

The Somalis were one of the most dispersed refugee populations in the UK (Van Hear 2004). According to Annie et al. (2005:7), there was a general perception that refugees had tended to be dispersed to areas with higher

levels of deprivation and vacant housing. Such dispersal policy was creating long-term “ghettos” in deprived areas where asylum seekers were more likely to suffer racial assaults and harassments.⁵ (see Pearl & Zetter 2002; Phillips 2006; Hynes & Sales 2010).

Dispersal may also be about preventing refugees from settling into ethnic enclaves, hoping thus to reduce their visibility, improve their prospects for integration, as well as decrease refugee costs to the taxpayers (see Dunnigan et al., 1996).

Robinson and Reeve (2006) acknowledge that ‘not very much’ is known about the new immigrants, their contributions to society and the impact of their arrival in neighbourhoods, towns, cities and the country at large. Nonetheless, they draw on ‘evidence from across a range of disciplines and policy realms’ to piece together a number of very general conclusions about the experiences of new immigrants at the neighbourhood level. The first one is that new immigrant households, regardless of status, typically live in poor quality housing in inner-city neighbourhoods often characterised by deprivation and social exclusion. The challenges raised by living in such locations can be compounded by the problems that some new immigrants encounter accessing the care, support and assistance they require (*ibid.*, p. 37-38).

Secondly, new immigrants settling in neighbourhoods with a more limited history of minority ethnic settlement are more prone to experience harassment, abuse and violence (Robinson, Andersson, & Musterd 2003; Robinson & Reeve 2006). Third, the settlement of new immigrant households in deprived neighbourhoods can serve to compound their own deprivation and reinforce existing geographies of exclusion and disadvantage (See also Sibley 1995; Ratcliffe 2002; Pearl & Zetter 2002). Fourth, and on the positive side, these neighbourhoods are often home to other immigrant households and established minority ethnic populations. Hence, they can be rich in various resources vital to helping new immigrants meet the challenge

of satisfying their material needs, coping with hostility and discrimination, engaging with key services and negotiating a place in British society (Robinson & Reeve 2006: 38).

While economic circumstances have not been *particularly* propitious for refugee resettlement in Britain (Kushner & Knox 1999:335, my italics), it is the politics of asylum that has polarized the country (see Home Office 2000, 2002; Geddes 2003). Between 1993 and 2006, six major pieces of primary legislation on asylum and immigration were introduced in the UK.⁶ The general trends have been to reinforce pre-entry controls and to accelerate the erosion of the welfare rights of asylum seekers and their withdrawal from the mainstream benefits system (Griffiths et al., 2005:2).

Refugee migration was also being restricted because of 'economic downturns and high levels of unemployment across Europe, as well as increasing levels of xenophobia from the media and the general public' (Bloch & Levy 1999:1). The media in particular, according to Michael Dummett (2001:3), "have acted upon a very simple principle: identify a fairly widespread prejudice, pander to it and inflame it, in the process misleading or actually lying to the readers as far as can be safely done" (see also Finney & Peach 2004; Greenslade 2005).⁷ (For a political right view on asylum and immigration in the UK, see Sergeant 2001; Harris 2003).

According to Finney and Peach (2004), anecdotal evidence suggests that generalised hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees may be compounded by other racial, religious and gender prejudices. Public opinion may therefore be particularly hostile to those refugees and asylum seekers that suffer from multiple forms of 'othering', such as those that are Black African, Middle Eastern and/or Muslim. A particularly visible group, Somali women refugees are often subject to harassment driven by racial, national, gender, and religious stereotyping from both white and ethnic minority British populations (ibid., p. 24).

One corollary of the increasingly restrictive immigration policy has been growing evidence of the social marginalisation of asylum seekers and refugees (GLA 2004), both in terms of their socioeconomic position and in relation to their diminishing rights and entitlements (Carey Wood et al, 1995; Zetter and Pearl, 1999, 2000). It has also had a detrimental effect on the welfare of asylum seeking children by placing greater stresses on their parents, and rendering them less able to provide the love and care that their children need (Rutter 2006:93).

The Somali community was described as “invisible” (see Griffiths 2002), “hard-to-reach” (Jones & Allebone 1999; Milbourne 2002), and “muddled minority” (The Economist 2003).⁸ They remained hidden from the view of official statistics largely because ‘Somali’ is rarely recognized as a distinct ethnic category (Cole & Robinson 2003:79). But also key social distinctions within the Somali community were lost in this official blinder: people from the countryside were lumped with Mogadishu elite, nomadic herdsman with bureaucrats, former militias with schoolteachers.

They were now recognized as “Somali” and “refugees” by those around them, and distinctions among them that they considered important were ignored, for example, factors such as: class and level of education that existed when they were in Somalia; factors such as: type of employment, English-speaking ability, utilization of social services, education, and residence in the UK (Compare Mortland 1996).

When analyzing the economic progress of refugee groups, according to Steven Gold (1996), three main issues must be considered. First, one must evaluate the population's ability to find jobs. The second issue involves the level of income produced. Ideally, earnings should permit a refugee to survive without reliance on government benefits. Finally, if a refugee group is to achieve integration into the host society, prospects for economic mobility should exist (ibid., p. 287). In this context, visible

groups are more vulnerable than invisible groups on the basis that (a) they do not have the option of assimilation, (b) they have less power to evade prejudices than invisible groups, and (c) they have also less power to alter those prejudices (Yoshino 1998: 491-2).

Class background is often considered the single most important factor shaping immigrants' adaptation (Steinberg 1989, 2000; Portes & Macleod 1996). Many immigrants arrive with levels of human capital, i.e., job skills and educational credentials, above that of natives, and use them to obtain professional employment or operate their own businesses. Others arrive with little human capital, and hence face very bleak economic prospects in a services and information economy that demands even higher levels of education and technical skills (Hein 2006:37).

Most Somali refugees fall within the 'lower-human-capital' segment of contemporary immigrants,⁹ and faced enormous economic disadvantage as they began their adaptation to British society (see Griffiths 2002; Harris 2004; Woods 2004). They lacked formal education, job skills, and measurable economic resources.¹⁰ Most had very little facility with the English language and were unfamiliar with the customs and expectations of a post industrial society (Bloch 2002; Bloch 2002a; Bloch 2004). This situation helps to explain partly why the Somalis have the lowest employment levels amongst the new immigrants at 12.1% (Kyambi 2005:89), and why most had to start their life in the new land on welfare and on manual wage labour.¹¹

Moreover, Somalis faced classic 'refugee experience' (Ager 1999) upon arrival in Britain. They had to function in an alien environment without the full family and community resources that could provide practical and emotional support. Their memories of a lost home, lost kin, and lost community are painful, and the demands of the new country are forbidding because of age, lack of schooling, physical ailments, psychological trauma, and lack of

experience in navigating the complex bureaucracies, dangerous streets, and loose community ties (see Haines 2007:61).

The meanings of past events, according to Jeremy Hein, are largely determined by a poly-phonic discourse in the present. Yet they ought not to be thought of as optional identities since they will remain potent symbols for future generations (Hein 2006:243). Immigrants sometimes wish that homeland experiences would “stay put” and not follow them, says Hein. But, as the German novelist W. G. Sebald eloquently reminds us, historical trauma has a peculiar durability: “We also have appointments to keep in the past, in what has gone before and is for the most part extinguished, and must go there in search of places and people who have some connections with us on the far side of time” (Sebald 2001:258, cited by Hein 2006:243).

The historical traumas Sebald referred to is amply demonstrated by the Somali community in the UK with their incessant ‘fragmentation and division’ (Harris 2004:66).

There are, for instance, some 100 Somali RCOs (Refugee Community Organisations) in London alone, with scores more throughout the country. Yet, British voluntary and statutory agencies feel frustrated at the lack of representative Somali bodies with a solid base, and through which to channel funds and assistance (Harris 2004:66). Because the community is so divided, it is difficult to involve them in democratic structures. According to Harris, clanship or in more derogatory terminology ‘clanism’ or ‘tribalism’ is at the root cause of Somali discord (ibid., p. 67).

According to Griffiths (2002:94), the lack of community in the sense of an inclusive network of support mechanisms and forms of identification is the most notable feature of life for Somalis. He goes on to say that ‘clan divisions and factionalism inherited from the home country have been one set of factors which have contributed to the invisibility and marginalisation of Somalis in London’.

Somalis as members of BMEs (Black and minority ethnic groups)

The idea here is that the Somali community, 'being dark-skinned migrants' (Muir 2010), experience 'minority ethnic disadvantage' (Platt 2007:59). As with all other minority groups, their patterns of acceptance and social identification continue to posit a common "minority" experience, encapsulated in the term BME or black and minority ethnics (Waters 2008:7). More to the point, they face discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity.

Two points to make before I proceed to examine this topic. First, because they are a new community, there is not enough, let alone systematic, data on the extent to which the Somalis suffer ethnic disadvantage in the UK. I therefore briefly review the literature on ethnic minority disadvantage in general terms rather than specifically about the Somali community. Second and related to the above, unlike their Afro-Caribbean counterparts, the majority of Somalis do not share a history of several generations in the UK 'marked early on by harsh discriminatory treatment and official exclusion' (e.g., Patterson 1965; Rex & Tomlinson 1979; Brown 1984; Solomos 1993; Sewell 1998; Phillips & Phillips 1999).

The implication of the latter, according to Waters and Kasinitz (2010:127), is as follows. The fact that the children of immigrants have come to be categorized as members of native "minority groups" does not mean their experience has been the same as that of the native minorities. They clearly do suffer much of the same prejudice and discrimination, but they do not inherit the scars and handicaps of a long history of racial exclusion. Nor, for them, are everyday incidents of discrimination likely to be seen as connected to deep and pervasive power asymmetries. Such incidents are not trivial, but they can be challenged and they do not engender hopelessness (ibid.:128).

According to David Mason (2003:12), in order to qualify for designation as an ethnic minority, a category of people must exhibit a degree of

'difference' that is regarded as significant. As a result, not every group having a distinctive culture and constituting a minority in the British population is normally included. Thus, the large communities of people of Cypriot, Italian and Polish origin (to name only a few) that are found in many British cities are rarely thought of as constituting ethnic minorities. Similarly, people of Irish descent, a significant proportion of the British population (Mason 2000:21), are rarely so designated. In practice, according to Mason (2003:12), it is an unstable combination of skin colour and culture that marks off 'ethnic minorities' from the majority population in Britain.

Despite the implicit emphasis on difference, in Mason's view, 'ethnic minorities' are typically seen to have more in common with one another than with the 'majority'. Diversity *among* the groups so designated is thus downplayed while their purported difference *from the rest* of the population is exaggerated. Ethnic minorities, therefore, are those whose skin colour is not 'white'. There may be differences between them, but these are insignificant relative to their fundamental difference from some presumed British norm – itself marked ultimately by whiteness (Mason 2003:12).

Clark, Putnam and Fieldhouse (2010:18) concur with mason's view. In Britain, they suggest, the salient conceptual divide is between whites and others. That is reflected in the widespread official use of the phrase 'black and minority ethnic', an umbrella term for all non-whites. This is reflected too, according to these authors, in an ethnicity census question which splits up non-whites into all sorts of categories – such as Black African and Bangladeshi Asian – but treats whites, more or less, as an undifferentiated block (ibid.:18).

One consequence of this BME designation, according to Modood et al. (1997: 295-96, cited by Mason 2003:12) is that, as long as priority is assigned by white people to differences of physical appearance, the

identity choices of members of minority ethnic communities will be significantly constrained. Wittingly or unwittingly, this is the price the Somalis will have to pay for their refugee status in Britain: the price of leaving a nation in which they are members of the majority race and joining the ranks of Britain's "racialised minorities" (compare Kasinitz, Battle, & Miyares 2001).

The Policy Studies Institute (PSI) conducted a series of major studies which have charted the experiences of ethnic minorities in Britain since the 1960s (Daniel 1968; Smith 1977; Brown and Gay 1985; Modood et al., 1997). Together, these studies provide the most systematic data, spanning over a 20-year period, on the magnitude of discrimination in the UK (Pilkington 2003:43). What the first of these studies (Daniel 1968) discovered was that the non-white immigrants met by far the most discrimination. Later studies also confirmed that discrimination still remained considerable, and was based predominantly on skin colour (Pilkington 2003:44).

While Smith (1977) detected a fall in the level of discrimination between 1967 and 1973, Brown and Gay (1985) found little evidence to suggest that the level of racial discrimination (found in 1984—85) had decreased since 1973 (Pilkington 2003:44). At least a third of employers still discriminated against non-White applicants for jobs (*ibid.*).

In contrast to previous PSI studies, which used a series of situation tests in which actors applied for jobs (Daniel 1968) and 'correspondence testing' where matching written applications were sent in reply to advertised vacancies (Brown & Gay 1985), the 1994 PSI test (Modood et al. 1997) chose instead to examine people's beliefs and attitudes (Pilkington 2003:44). In that survey, 90 per cent of White respondents and 75 per cent of minority ethnic interviewees reported that they believed in the existence of discrimination. More pointedly, roughly one in five minority ethnic respondents claimed to have had direct experience of it (*ibid.*:44). One of

these surveys also found that there was a religious component of racial discrimination, primarily a prejudice against Muslims (Modood *et al.* 1997: 133, cited by Pilkington 2003:45). Other recent tests (CRE 1996; Simpson & Stevenson 1994) also continue to point to racial discrimination at the local level.

In comparison with the situation of black and minority groups in the U. S., Clark, Putnam and Fieldhouse (2010:47) found a hopeful way of explaining the position of BMEs in the UK. In centralized Britain, they say, after the ban on outright discrimination that was imposed during the 1960s, there were few practical bars on assimilation – despite widespread continuing racism. The landlords' signs saying 'no dogs, no blacks, and no Irish' were torn down, and ethnic minorities gained full access to private rented housing as well as to subsidized council housing which had once been the preserve of the white working class (*ibid.*). As to who gets the jobs, Clark *et al.* are not mincing their words. The immediate answer provided by the last census in both countries (that is the U. S. & Britain) is, more or less, that white people are always and everywhere more likely to be in work (*ibid.*:55).

Heath and Cheung (2006:5) look at the patterns of overall or 'gross' disadvantage experienced by different ethnic minorities. They then consider what they called 'net' disadvantages or 'ethnic penalties'. An ethnic penalty is 'a broader concept than that of discrimination', since it refers 'to all the sources of disadvantage that might lead an ethnic group to fare less well in the labour market than do similarly qualified Whites' (Heath and McMahon 1997: 91). On this score, if members of minority ethnic groups, with the same educational qualifications as native-born Whites, do not have the same opportunities, we can conclude that they face an ethnic penalty (Pilkington 2003:46).

Pilkington (2003:46) asserts that the evidence put forward by Heath and McMahon (1997) demonstrates even more strongly than the previous

analysis that racial discrimination is occurring. In his own words: "There seems no good reason to question the main conclusion of the extensive research available, namely that the basis for the discrimination met by minority ethnic groups is primarily colour and not, as some had thought, newness or indeed, as Modood suggests, a mixture of religion and colour".

According to Heath and Cheung (2006:2), there is also considerable evidence from the Home Office Citizenship Survey (HOCS) 2003 and from field experiments that unequal treatment on grounds of race or colour is likely to be a major factor underlying the pattern of ethnic penalties. In drawing together these empirical results, Heath and Cheung (2006:18) conclude thus:

"Overall a number of ethnic minority groups, notably Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African men continue to experience higher unemployment rates, greater concentrations in routine and semi-routine work and lower hourly earnings than do members of the comparison group of British and other whites. Women from these groups also have higher unemployment rates than the comparison group although, for those in work, average hourly earnings tend to be as high or higher than those of white women."

But what about the second generation? For those who have grown up in Britain, issues of language, qualifications obtained abroad, limited networks and particular job-search activities should not apply, or at least, for the latter two, not to the same extent, given the opportunities for engaging through schooling with different networks and models. In theory, the only factors that should determine differences in employment experiences for this group should be where people started in terms of social class backgrounds and the levels of qualifications they have achieved, as well as their age, representing the stage they are at in their work history, and possibly their health status (Platt 2007:67). Past research establishes that second generation ethnic minorities in Britain have on average higher educational attainment than first generation ethnic minorities (e.g., Dustmann & Theodoropoulos 2006; Simpson et al., 2006; Modood et al., 1997).

Comparing the second generation to native born British whites, Dustmann & Theodoropoulos (2006) found that both first and second generation ethnic minorities had on average higher levels of education compared to their white native peers. Additionally, second generation immigrants had higher educational attainment than their parents. Among the second generation, Black-African males and females have the highest years of education followed by the Chinese and then the Indians. There is an observable gender gap except for the Chinese. All ethnic minority second generation females have more years of full-time education than white native females. They found the overall difference in years of full-time education between second generation ethnic minorities and their British born peers to be 1.3 years for males and 0.8 years for females (p.19). They also found that second generation ethnic minorities with the exception of Black-Caribbeans were more likely to obtain higher educational qualifications than their white British born peers (cited by Waters 2008:47-48).

Unfortunately, this educational advantage of second generation ethnic minorities over their British peers is not carried over into the labor market, where the second generation perform “substantially worse than their native white peers” (ibid.:48). In other words, members of minority ethnic groups were not getting appropriate returns to their qualifications (Battu & Sloane 2004). But that wasn’t all. It was suggested that being UK born and being fluent in English increased, rather than decreased, the mismatch between qualifications and jobs for minority ethnic groups (Platt 2006:7).

According to Heath and Cheung (2006:3), the employment differentials between whites and non-whites cannot be explained by the age, education or foreign birth of ethnic minority groups. Even for the second generation, born and educated in Britain, there are significant net disadvantages (after statistical controls) for Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men in the labour market with respect to unemployment, earnings and occupational attainment. The ethnic penalties experienced by

Black Africans, both men and women, are especially high. Indians and Chinese tend to be able to compete on somewhat more equal terms than the other minorities, but even they experience some disadvantage (*ibid.*).

Growing up ethnic in the United Kingdom (see Tienda 2005) has also been difficult for the children of refugees. The parents' low socioeconomic status makes it difficult for them to succeed, 'even though both parents and children desperately want to get ahead' (see Zhou 2001:188). Of course, poverty (e.g., Biddle 2001) and family circumstance (e.g., Coleman et al., 1966; Coleman 1990) have long been recognized as significant risk factors for educational access and achievement.

According to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2007:248), poverty tends to limit opportunities, and it frequently coexists with a variety of other factors that augment risks, such as single parenthood, residence in violent neighborhoods saturated with gang activity and drug trade, and schools that are segregated, over-crowded, and understaffed. Children raised in circumstances of poverty are also more vulnerable to an array of psychological distresses, including difficulties concentrating and sleeping, anxiety, and depression, as well as a heightened exposure to delinquency and violence—all of which have implications for educational outcomes (*ibid.*:249).

In the context of this study, it is also suggested that access to, and achievement within, education in Britain are unequal and that students from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and those who come from homes that are impoverished or are not fluent in English have a much harder time in schools than those who do not possess these disadvantages (e.g., Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Walden 1996; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Gorard 2000; Youdell 2003).

But also race and racism permeate education policy and practice (Drew 1995; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings 2004; Gillborn 1995, 2005, 2008).

Differential outcomes in attainment, exclusions and in-school processes all affect the experiences of ethnic minority pupils and their achievements (Bloch & Solomos 2010:220). Moreover, the stereotyping by teachers impacts on the attainment levels of these pupils (ibid.; see also Gillborn & Rollock 2010). The young people in this research would have experienced a lot of these difficulties.

Somali Muslim disadvantage

The main thrust of my argument here is that, in addition to their ethnic minority disadvantage, the Somalis may also suffer disadvantage and discrimination for having a Muslim religious identity. Again I have no specific data to hand because 'there is little pre-existing research of Somali Muslim experience in the UK' (see Change Institute 2009). I, therefore, briefly review the literature on Muslim exclusion and discrimination which, in my view, will give us a troubling glimpse of what the Somali community may already be experiencing (or may experience in the future).

My brief review here is based primarily on three reports concerned with Muslims in the UK, two by the Open Society Institute (2004, 2005) and one by the Young Foundation in London (Bunqlawala 2010), all available online. The former is concerned with the 'social exclusion' of Muslims in general, whereas the latter deals specifically with British Muslim women in the labour market.

The Open Society Institute (2005:46), here after referred to as OSI, calls for Muslims to be recognized as a distinct "social group" whose membership is linked by common faith-based beliefs, sentiments, experiences and attitudes. The reason for this recognition, according to the OSI's report, is because Muslims as a group face problems of social exclusion (p. 47). The report turns to the Government's definition of social exclusion 'as a short-

hand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of related problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, unfair discrimination, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown' (see Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Tackling Social Exclusion, 2004).

The OSI (2005:71), however, broadens the definition of exclusion faced by British Muslims to include three main types: *exclusion through violence, economic exclusion, and political and public exclusion*.

Social exclusion premised on *exclusion through violence* is driven not only by hate crimes, but also by less severe incidents of harassment and intimidation, including "hate speech" (ibid.). According to the OSI (2005:71), there is evidence of racially aggravated crime motivated by hatred of Muslims in both the pre- and post-September 11 period. Between December 2001 and March 2003, there were 18 successful prosecutions for religiously aggravated offences, of which ten involved Muslim victims. The report is also critical of the fact that there was a significant proportion of cases in which the racial elements to the charges were reduced inappropriately (p. 72).

Hate speech is another area which the report looks at briefly, but doesn't provide specific incidents or crime figures. It is suggested that prejudice against a particular group manifests itself in hate speech. This can consist of expressions of pejorative views about Islam and Muslims in private speech. The problem is more serious, however, when such views are expressed in public speech. The OSI report is of the view that publicly expressed hate speech against Muslims can incite certain individuals to specific acts of violence against Muslims and their property (ibid.:74).

On the other hand, the importance of free speech in a liberal society places legitimate limitations on the ability of the State to regulate hate speech (p. 63). Thus, according to OSI, there is a critical difference between hate speech directed against Muslims and legitimate criticism of Islam. In this

context, the report recommends that criminal law be used in only the most extreme cases, where there is a risk of either physical violence or public disorder (ibid.).

A second type of exclusion, *economic exclusion*, is faced by many British Muslims in the areas of employment, education or access to private and public services. The latter is particularly important, given that a direct consequence of the economic exclusion encountered by Muslims is that they are disproportionately reliant on public and welfare services (OSI 2005:48).

According to the OSI report, the phenomenon of economic deprivation can be summarised as exploitation, marginalisation and powerlessness (p. 76). Muslims in general are said to be concentrated among the lowest economic and social strata, and are disproportionately dependant on public and welfare services and institutions (p. 77). There are deep structures of inequality faced by Muslim communities. The specific and persistent economic disadvantage of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, who are disproportionately unemployed or involved in low-paid forms of employment is cited as an example (ibid.).

Moreover, Muslims continue to suffer from a combination of related problems. For example, compared to other faith communities, Muslim men and women in Great Britain had the highest rate of reported ill health in 2001. A total of 13 per cent of Muslim men and 16 per cent of Muslim women described their state of health as “not good” compared to around eight per cent for the population as a whole. Taking into account age structures, Muslims also had the highest rates of disability. Compared to households of other faith groups, Muslim households were the most likely to be situated in socially rented accommodation, to experience overcrowding and to lack central heating (OSI 2005:66-67).

The Muslims’ labour market experience was also examined in these reports (OSI 2004, 2005). It is suggested that Muslims currently constitute three per

cent of the UK population, and that they are by far the most disadvantaged faith group in the labour market. For instance, Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than the majority Christian group. They have the lowest employment rate of any group, at 38 per cent, and the highest economic inactivity rate, at 52 per cent. At 17 per cent, Muslims represent the largest faith group who have never worked or are long-term unemployed. Over half of Muslims are economically inactive, compared to a third of all other faith groups. At 68 per cent, Muslim women have the highest level of economic inactivity amongst all faith groups (OSI 2004:8; OSI 2005:196).

Zamila Bunglawala, who studied the latter, agrees that British Muslim women are the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labour market, with 68 percent defined as inactive and only 29 percent in employment. According to her, it is widely assumed that British Muslim women have low levels of educational attainment, which is then assumed to explain their low levels of employment. However, that may not be the case. She suggests that only 22 percent of British Muslims have no qualifications compared to 29 percent of the general population. Fifty percent of British Muslims now enter higher education compared to 38 percent of their White counterparts. 36 percent of British Muslim women respondents in the small-scale survey undertaken for her study (Bunglawala 2010:4) have graduate or post-graduate qualifications.

However, despite their high levels of education, positive attitudes and overwhelming family support to work, British Muslim women continue to do less well in the labour market. Bunglawala's analysis shows that 51 percent of second generation British Muslim women are inactive in the labour market, compared to only 17 percent of second generation Hindu women. Thirteen percent of second generation British Muslim women are unemployed, compared to four percent of second generation Hindu and Sikh women, and three percent of White women. Her study confirms other findings which suggested that in eight of the nine regions of the UK, the British Muslim women's inactivity level is higher than their employment

level. In some regions the British Muslim women's economic inactivity levels are even a mirror image of the White employment level, she suggests. For example, in the West Midlands the employment rate for British Muslim women is 21 percent and the inactivity rate is 70 percent. Compare this with a White employment rate in the same region of 75 percent, and a White inactivity rate of 21 percent (Bunglawala 2010:5).

According to these authors, Muslims represent a very high proportion of the younger age cohort in the UK. 90 per cent of Muslims is said to be aged under 50. The average age of Muslims is also said to be 28, 13 years below the national average. The authors acknowledge that data by ethnicity was used in these reports to highlight the experiences of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups as a proxy for the broader group of British Muslims. They further acknowledge that the extent to which religion is a driver for labour market outcomes is not yet known, and that this was a significant knowledge gap regarding the situation of Muslims in Britain (OSI 2005:197).

The third type of the social exclusion encountered by British Muslims, according to the OSI report (2005:85), is *political and public exclusion*. In the present climate, it is suggested that Muslims are in a unique situation in Britain. As the largest religious minority, they are faced with a public culture in the national and international sphere that consistently links their religion to violence and terrorism. One consequence of this situation is the prevalence of prejudice and stereotypes about Muslims which can manifest themselves in hate crimes, hate speech and discriminatory conduct (ibid.).

According to these reports, the situation of Muslims in Britain before September 11 was characterised by poverty and alienation. Alexander (2000, cited by OSI 2005:67) notes that, even prior to September 11, Muslim young men had emerged as the new "folk devils" of popular and media imagination and were represented as the embodiment of fundamentalism. Since September 11, international events have ensured that the British Muslim community has become the focus of public attention. The coverage given to

the “war on terror” and the Al Qaeda movement has generated an ongoing debate about Islam and the status of British Muslims. The predominant paradigm for the public discourse surrounding Islam and Muslims is one of security issues and the “war on terror”.

In the view of OSI, one of the consequences of the overlap in the public discourse on Islam/Muslims and violence/terrorism is that it will contribute to reinforcing existing prejudice against Muslims within Britain. More specifically, the situation is likely to result in negative stereotypes, which may manifest themselves in individual attitudes and conduct in a number of different ways. First, there can be greater violence and harassment by perpetrators who specifically target Muslims, or those perceived to be Muslims. Second, there is a risk of increased discriminatory treatment, and perception of discriminatory treatment, of Muslims by law enforcement agencies, such as the police, Customs and Excise, immigration officials, and the Crown Prosecution Service. This problem will exacerbate already difficult relationships between these agents of the State and Muslim communities, and it is of particular importance given the reality of heavier policing of Muslim communities as part of the “war on terror” (OSI 2005:68; see also Abbas 2005).

Third, these negative stereotypes may result in an increase in discriminatory attitudes and conduct by individual actors and institutions in the public and the private sector, especially as anti-Muslim prejudice is a growing strand of racism (OSI 2005:69). The report cites a recent study which explored the impact of September 11 on discrimination and racism on different religious and ethnic groups. It found that religion was more important than ethnicity in indicating which groups are more likely to experience racism and discrimination post- September 11 (*ibid.*).

Muslims are said to be concentrated in some of the poorest sections of society, and are therefore disproportionately high users of public services. The way in which these stereotypes may affect the delivery of appropriate

public services is of particular importance, according to these reports. Furthermore, negative images of Muslims result in the formation of prejudiced attitudes, which are manifested as hate speech *and racist harassments* against Muslims (my italics). The combination of these factors only serves to add to the pre-September 11 position of Muslims as a socially excluded group (OSI 2005:69).

Finally, it is suggested that there is a long-standing anomaly in the Race Relations Act (1976) in that ethnic religious minorities, such as Sikhs and Jews, were protected directly, while non-ethnic religious minorities, such as Muslims, received only indirect protection, and in some cases no protection (ibid.:77). In this context, Modood (2005:467) had this to say:

“It would be no exaggeration to say that many multiculturalists are dismayed by the emergence of Muslim consciousness ... They never intended the recognition of difference to be extended to Muslims; for them, Muslim identity is a bastard child of British multiculturalism ... While Muslims have become the most visible and politicized minority group, this in due course turns out to have been indicative of a new phase in minority stigmatization and mobilization.”

Of course, the counter argument must be this: the difficulties Muslims found in reconciling their strong sense of religious identity with the looser identity requirements of a multicultural secular society has great concern for the wider community (see McLaughlin 2010:96).

Clark et al. (2010:110) have a different take on it. They posit that the debate played out at the national level determines not only who is anxious about immigrants but also which particular groups of immigrants cause the most worry. In the 1980s Britain, they suggest, living near Afro-Caribbeans was the cause for particular anxiety, but the debate has since moved on and the suspicions will have moved on in tandem (ibid.).

After 9/11 and London's own terrorist attacks in 2005, say Clark et al., suspicions were raised that Muslims did not fit in. There is a more recent

evidence, according to these authors, that racial threat is highest in neighbourhoods with large Bangladeshi or Pakistani populations – who of course, tend to be Muslims (e.g., Bowyer 2008, 2009). In the space of less than a generation, their argument goes, the evolving debate about minorities has seen one bogeyman being displaced by another (ibid.:110).

The study

This research originally began as a project looking at the war-time educational experience of children in Mogadishu, Somalia. That project was started in 1994 when I won a scholarship from the Africa Educational Trust to study at the Institute of Education, University of London. However, in time, I found myself unable to pursue this particular project to a successful conclusion. Part of the problem was data collection. Because of the chaos that reigned (and still continue to reign) in Mogadishu, I simply couldn't travel to collect data from that city. Things just dragged on and, being a scholarship student, I soon realized that my funding had dried up.

At the same time, more and more Somali refugee families and their children were arriving in the UK, and these (rather than those back home) were 'in the eye of the storm' in terms of what people wrote about Somalia and its people. As Joan Moore (2008:xxiv) aptly put it: "It is an axiom of social science *as old as the hills* that social research reflects the preoccupations of the time (italics are mine)".

Thus at the beginning of 1997, and very close to the end of my scholarship, I refocused my research to look at the experience of those arriving here. Between June and July 1997, I conducted interviews with ten Somali refugee parents (6 mothers and 4 fathers) across London to understand how their experience and attitudes framed the immediate environment of their children (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2001). I had amassed a great deal of data from these interviews about parental reflections on why they had

decided to leave their country, their pre-migration and flight experiences, their life experiences in the UK, their perceptions of inner city schools and neighbourhood environments, and how they viewed their children's current lives and future prospects. This is the primary source for one set of the data reported in *Chapter IV, Somali Parents' Stories*.

I have always cherished the idea that education and learning was a life-long process, too precious to be the exclusive domain of the young. So older but perhaps wiser, I returned to my studies in 2004. By then, an academic debate has already emerged about the future the children of today's many immigrants and refugees face (see Telles & Ortiz 2008:4).

My refocusing on the young people was also stimulated by concerns about Somali children's decline. Their parent generation has come into Britain as refugees and asylum seekers and has endured much occupational and social downgrading (see Harris 2004; Griffiths 2002). Most Somali young people were said to fare less well than the children of other new communities in the UK (Rutter 2003, 2005, 2006; Watters 2008). Many of them leave full time education unconfident and underachieving, and their job prospects limited (ibid.). As Muslims and recent arrivals, this argument goes on, the Somalis' language and culture cuts them off from mainstream British society and decreases their children's access to education and employment in the new environment (e.g., Griffiths 2002; Rutter 2006; Harris 2004). Consequently, it was suggested that Somali youth were potentially excluded from mainstream society, and were at risk of depression and developing mental health problems (Harris 2004:4).

With many predicting a bleak future for the children of Somali refugees, I set about finding out what exactly was happening to these young men and women and how they were faring in British society. I conducted a second round of field work late 2008 and early 2009. This field work consisted of follow-up interviews with the parents and fresh interviews with their now grown up children to understand their experience of life in inner city

schools, institutions and neighbourhoods. Altogether I interviewed 40 individuals, 14 parents and 26 young men and women. Their stories, distributed across the thesis and in the appendices, serve to illuminate the challenges confronting these young people and the distinct ways in which they have attempted to adapt to their new environment.

The main object of the study was to understand the contemporary dynamics of Somali young people's adaptation to life in Britain. Of particular relevance are the following two questions: how is the group of young people in the research faring educationally and occupationally? And what are the challenges confronting them in their everyday lives, as they adjust to a new society? [i.e., issues of identity, goals, aspirations, and achievement] (see Rumbaut & Portes 2001:12). Even though the respondents are young, we can see the outlines of their future trajectories in their experience. The data gives a particularly good sense of how far these young people have progressed in their education, but conclusions about their career outcomes must remain tentative (see Mollenkopf et al., 2005:458-9).

The outcomes reported in the thesis pertain to the hard realities of early adult life, both progress and struggle, experienced by the group. These range from actual educational achievement and occupational status to unemployment. I find that many of the young people interviewed are moving ahead educationally. Some are also successful occupationally.

However, a significant minority is being left behind. Of these, there are the long-term unemployed. Others are NEET, or not currently engaged in employment, education or training. Entry into the labour market is a particular problem for both males and females. A few of the males have engaged in delinquent behaviours, and served time in Young Offender Institutions (YOI). Several young men also got involved with gangs and violence, and openly led a drug-dictated lifestyle resulting in some being sent back to Somalia 'for rehabilitation'. At least one young man has been

resettled back in his parents' old home-town with a great effort on the part of his parents in London who were determined to save his life.

The evidence also points to the fact that girls are outperforming boys both academically and in the labour markets. Consistent with existing literature, the data supports the argument that 'second-generation girls' more highly structured and monitored lives can have positive effects on educational attainment' (Foner & Kasinitz 2007:277).

The young women in this study not only have higher educational expectations and attainment, they also aspire to higher status jobs than their male counterparts. The data illustrates how educational and occupational choices are intertwined, and how goals and trajectories differ for young men and women (compare Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005). While some of the young women have set their sights on traditionally gendered occupations, such as nursing, medical sciences and teaching, others aspire to attain higher status occupations. One young woman who trained as a solicitor had a found a job at a top high street London law firm.

In all, the evidence here reveals that most young people aspire to go to university because, in their view, it is only through higher education that relatively secure employment with good incomes are attainable. That may be true, but there is also a downside to this. Most prior work on this topic demonstrates that black and ethnic minority communities in the UK continue to face 'ethnic penalties' in the labour market (Heath 2001; Heath & McMahon 2005; Heath & Cheung 2006; Heath et al., 2008). These penalties include employer discrimination; a lack of knowledge of the job opportunities available; the type of skills attained (or lack thereof); and few established employer networks (see National Skills Forum 2010; National Audit Office 2008). The Somali young people in this research (and beyond) now have to contend with a so-called 'Muslim Penalty' added to this list (e.g., Open Society Institute 2004, 2005; Bunglawala 2010).

Research Questions

The main object of this study is to document and interpret a number of key issues in the lives and experience of a group of young Somali men and women coming of age in London. I shall focus on the major themes in the lives of these young people and the challenges confronting them in terms of adjustment to a new society, family and school life, identity, goals, aspirations, and achievement (*compare* Zhou & Bankston 1998; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

Of particular relevance are the following three questions: how is the group of young people in the research faring educationally and occupationally? What are the challenges confronting them in their everyday lives? And to what extent do refugee parents, who hold high aspirations for their children, translate those aspirations into outcomes favourable to the children's success at school and in society? (*compare* Waters 1999).

While the thesis focuses on how the young people 'experience the transition to adulthood' (see Ennели et al., 2005:viii), it also sheds light on how the background of war, flight and exile, and the refugee experience have continued to influence the lives of these children and their families.

Crosscutting issues, concepts, and definitions

The study on the adaptation of refugee children is complex and has been examined by many researchers from many disciplines. This has resulted in a plethora of concepts and terms, often with overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, meanings (Berry et al., 2006:10). Although a detailed presentation of these arguments is beyond the scope of this thesis, I do not want to skirt them entirely.

The difficulty I have here, of course, is that none of the main authors whose work guides my current formulations of the project (e.g., Zhou & Bankston 1998; Waters 1999; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2002; Kasinitz, Mollenkof, & Waters 2004; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova 2008; Kasinitz et al., 2008) explicitly attempt to define the term adaptation. They all shy away from it, possibly because of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the topic, '*and the controversy* particularly in regard to defining good adaptation in different cultural contexts' (Masten & Powell 2003:7, my italics).

Some definitions have ranged from simply an absence of disorder or mental health problems, to a focus on competence in developmental tasks, to the inclusion of both competence criteria and an absence of symptoms (Masten 2001). Berry et al., (2006:13), in their large international study '*Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition*', examined two types of adaptation: psychological adaptation (including life satisfaction, self-esteem, and psychological problems measured in terms of anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms) and sociocultural adaptation (including school adjustment and behavior problems, that is, antisocial behavior in school and in the community). I must say here that my work is neither psychological nor focused on either of Berry et al.'s two aspects of adaptation, nor of Masten's competence criteria and absence of symptoms.

The following works come closer to my view of adaptation. In her attempt to address adaptation and its meaning for America, Carol Mortland (2001:2) highlights three pertinent questions, namely: How have the immigrants' lives changed since they arrived? How have they adjusted to American realities? How do they view their lives as immigrants? Mortland has it that, upon arrival, migrants develop their own systems of gaining resources and services. But she also talks of 'a tension between what they [the migrants] knew and were tied to before immigration and what they experience now.' Migration brings increased knowledge to immigrants, not only of their new

land, but an awareness that their homeland is set in a world larger than they previously knew (ibid.:3).

Similarly, for Hirschman, Kasinitz & De Wind (1999:127), two fundamental questions define how immigrant adaptation, assimilation and incorporation are addressed, namely: what happens to immigrants and how do they and their children become part of American life?

In the view of Portes & Rumbaut (2001), adaptation for the children of immigrants is essentially a matter of coping with the challenges of growing up in an environment foreign to themselves and their parents. The principal outcome is determined by school performance, language knowledge and use, ethnic identities, the level of parent-child generational conflict, and the extent to which peer relations reach beyond the ethnic circle (ibid.:22).

In the British context, the term 'integration' has been used (see 'Full and Equal Citizens' by the Home Office, 2001). According to Castles et al. (2001:12), however, integration as a concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated as there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of it. Earlier, Robinson (1998: 118) criticized 'integration' as a chaotic concept used by many, but understood differently by most. Indeed, while indicating a number of areas where integration is to be encouraged, 'Full and Equal Citizens' itself did not offer a formal definition of the term (Ager & Strang 2008:166).

A more hopeful position of 'integration' has recently been advanced by Ager & Strang (2008:166) who have identified elements central to perceptions of what constitutes 'successful' integration, namely: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the

local environment. According to these authors, it is the role of the state to remove these barriers and thus allow integration to take place (ibid.:181).

Equally Morawska (2008:470), in her comparative analysis of immigration/Ethnicity in Europe and the United States, has advanced a positive definition of 'integration'. In her view, the most common conceptual equivalent of assimilation used in the European studies is that of "integration." Like assimilation in American studies, she posits, integration is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, measured by indicators such as the degree of immigrants' residential concentration/segregation from natives, their educational achievement and employment, familiarity with the host country's language and the use of the home country one, self-identification, composition of primary and secondary social relations, naturalization, and political participation. European researchers, according to Morawska, recognize an immense diversity of "integration clusters" among and within immigrants groups.

In this thesis, I subscribe to Portes & Rumbau's (2001) notions and practices of adaptation, the issues and questions of adaptation raised by Carol Mortland (2001), Hirschman, Kasinitz & De Wind (1999) and, in the British context, the notions of integration set forth by Ager & Strang (2008), and Morawska (2008).

A word about my use of the terms: 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', 'refugee children', 'children of refugees', and 'second generation'. The term refugee has become more complex due to changes in the causes of forced migration in the past decades (Castles et al., 2001:123). Refugees, in common parlance, constitute those forced from their homes as a result of war or political persecution (Ager 1999; Marrus 2002). Following Alice Bloch (2005:23), I use the term refugee here to describe forced migrants at all stages of the determination process – that is *convention* refugees, people with Exceptional Leave to Remain, Humanitarian Protection, asylum

seekers, those with Indefinite Leave to Remain and refugees who have become naturalised citizens of an EU member state.

In demographic terms, anyone who crosses an international border with the intention of a long-term or permanent stay is an 'immigrant' or an 'international migrant' (Castles 2001:120). Hence 'Refugees' and 'Asylum Seekers' are technically sub-categories of international migrants (*ibid.*). Not only that, but the two categories have a lot more in common than is often acknowledged (see Gold 1992; McKay 2009). For these reasons, the words 'refugee(s)' and 'immigrant(s)' are used interchangeably in this thesis.

According to Watters (2008:7), being a refugee child is an ascribed identity temporally defined as relating normally to the ages of 0–17 years based on Western¹² conceptions of childhood and the transition to adulthood. In my case, drawing on the definitions of different generations of immigrant children by Hernandez (1999), and Hernandez & Darke (1999), I shall define 'refugee children' as those children who were born outside the United Kingdom and have arrived as refugees or asylum seekers with or without a family. 'Children of refugees,' on the other hand, refers to both British-born and foreign-born children (compare Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2002).

Second generation is an American concept, and is often not used in the UK.¹³ In recent years the numbering scheme has grown more complex, with further refinements, such as the "1.25 generation," the "1.5 generation," and the "1.75 generation," also being used (e.g., Zhou & Bankston 1998; Zhou 2001; Danico 2004; Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

According to Foner & Kasinitz (2007:270), the term generation is used in at least three distinct, albeit interrelated, ways in the social scientific literature. The first is in the sense of an age cohort—that is, people of approximately the same age who experience the same historical events at roughly the same points in their individual development. A second meaning of "generation," one favored by anthropologists, refers to genealogical rank

in a kinship system—for example, the relationship of individuals to parents in the generation before or children in the generation after. Finally, in studies of immigration, "generation" is used as a measure of distance from the "old country." Thus people who move to the U.S. from another society as adults are referred to as "first-generation" immigrants, their American-born children as the "second generation," and their children in turn as the "third generation."

Mollenkopf et al. (2005:495) define second generation as all those children born in the United States to one or two post-1965 immigrant parents and those who were born abroad but arrived by age twelve and have lived in the U. S. for at least a decade. There was also a wide-spread adoption of Ruben Rumbaut's term "the 1.5 generation" for people born abroad who emigrate as children and are largely raised in the U.S. (Foner & Kasinitz 2007:270). Rumbaut (1991:61) referred to children who are in many ways "marginal to both the old and the new worlds, and are fully part of neither of them."

Scope, range, and focus of literature

In this thesis, I draw on the extensive research done in the U.S. about the children of immigrants and refugees (e.g., Suárez-Orozco 1989; Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore 1991; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 1995, 2002; Portes & MacLeod 1996; Zhou & Bankston 1998; Hernandez & Charney, 1998; Hernandez 1999; Waters 1999; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova 2008), about the second generation (e.g., Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes 1996; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2004; Kasinitz et al., 2008), and about the new Americans (e.g., Heron 2001; Canniff 2001; Bailey 2002; Shavarini 2004; Wierzbicki 2004; Vargas-Reighley 2005; Feliciano 2005; Gonzalez 2005; DebBurman 2005).

While one cannot assume that the experiences of immigrants will be the same in Britain and the United States, the studies on the American immigrant experience may prove relevant to the future of immigrant and refugee communities in the UK and may, at least, provide a comparative framework (see Baluja 2003:53).

I also draw lessons from the experience of previous migration streams into the UK, the so-called BMEs (Black and Ethnic Minority groups), and in particular the experiences of black and Asian children in school and society (see Tomlinson 1987, 2004, 2008; Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Wrench & Qureshi 1996; Wrench & Hassan 1996; Sewell 1997, 1998; Bhatti 1999; Ghuman 1999, 2003; Lau 2000; Richardson 2005; Modood 2005a; Modood 2005b; Robinson & Valeny 2005; Berry et al., 2006).

Organization & content of the thesis

The thesis comprises four parts. The theoretical, methodological and historical background is laid out in *part 1: Foundations* (chapters 1 to 3), the stories of the parents in *part 2: The stories* (chapter 4), my findings and analysis in *part 3: Analysis & discourses* (chapters 5 to 7), and my *discussion and conclusion* in *part 4* of the same title (chapter 8).

Chapter 1 begins by providing a general contextual background and rationale for the study, including a brief outline of the historical and sociopolitical processes that led to refugee flight from Somalia, as well as the context of arrival for Somali refugees in the UK. It then introduces the main research questions together with a brief description of the terms and concepts used in the thesis. Chapter 2 reviews the theories and important findings that have guided scholarly understanding of assimilation and adaptation. It presents four major theoretical orientations, including segmented assimilation, which I feel are particularly suited to this study. It also pays special attention to how the Somali young people in this research

might fit into these conceptual frameworks. Chapter 3 describes the steps and procedures used for primary source data collection including study design, subjects, and sampling procedures. It provides a detailed description of both the initial fieldwork undertaken in 1997, and my new round of interviews conducted in 2008/9. Both projects have yielded a highly reliable data for my analysis.

In Part 2 (Chapter 4), I present profiles of individual parents and their children to provide a glimpse of the life and experience of these families in London in two different time periods, first in the late 1990s, and over a decade later in 2008/9. A profile in the words of participants is said to be the research product that is most consistent with the process of interviewing (Seidman 2006:119). It allows for the presentation of participants in context, clarification of their intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis (Dey 1993:30-39, cited by Seidman 2006:119). I call these profiles stories because they represent real accounts of events pulled together from the participants' own words. These stories serve to illuminate the challenges confronting Somali parents and their children, and the distinct ways in which they have attempted to adapt to their new environment.

Sadly because of word limit, I had to remove young people's stories from the thesis and place them in the Appendix. They consist of two chapters, and share a whopping word count of just under 40,000 in between them. Appendix A contains the stories of young women (12 stories), and Appendix B contains the stories of the young men (13 stories). All, except 3 young people, were the children of my original parent interviewees. They arrived in the UK as children, mostly with their parents, from Somalia at the beginning of the 1990s. My in-depth interviews with these young men and women provide rich detail on their lived experience; the variety of school life they encountered; their time in higher education; their early labour market experience; the difficulties they faced and the resources they drew in order to progress.

Part 3 (Chapters 5 to 7) presents the key themes drawn from interviews with young people. There are eight themes altogether, spread over three chapters. Chapter 5 begins with a description of relevant background data about the research participants, and then moves on to introduce two key themes, namely ethnic, racial and religious identities, and educational experiences and outcomes. Chapter 6 has three key themes drawn from young people's interviews, namely progress, decline, and gendered paths; Somali young people and employment; and resilience in the face of pervasive hazards. Chapter 7 has the last, but certainly not least, two themes drawn from the interviews, namely transnationalism, and ideas about success.

I summarize the results in part 4 (chapter 8). First, the conclusions from the earlier chapters will be summarized into an account of how the Somali young people are faring educationally and occupationally, providing a mixed picture of progress (e.g., educational achievement, and opportunities for a successful career and a respected standing in society) or decline, or rather 'downward assimilation' (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006), (e.g., educational underachievement, lack of skills, being NEET or unemployed, getting involved with youth gangs and drug-dictated lifestyles, and imprisonment). Next, the empirical evidence shall be evaluated on the basis of the main theoretical approach 'segmented assimilation' proposed in chapter two. I then present a brief overview of the challenges confronting Somali young people as they come of age in British society. And finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for theory, research and practice.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO REFUGEE ADAPTATION

All methods of research are underpinned by a social theory of one type or another (Holdaway 2000:156). However, whereas there is little disagreement about the role and place of theory in quantitative research (Cresswell 2002, 2003), there is no consensus either about its role or its function in qualitative research (see Anfara & Mertz 2006:xix).

Clearly, it is beyond the remit of this thesis to expound on the role of theory in qualitative research. Suffice it to say here that many qualitative researchers contend that theory plays a key role in framing and conducting almost every aspect of the study (e.g., Goetz & LeCompte 1984; Wolcott 1995; Merriam 1998; Miles & Huberman 1994; Maxwell 1996; Schram 2003).

Among the advocates of this position, according to Anfara and Mertz (2006:xxv), few are as vehement as Flinders and Mills (1993). In their book, *Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*, they assert the following: "Few of us now claim that we enter the field tabula rasa, unencumbered by notions of the phenomena we seek to understand" (p. xi). They suggest that theory includes "any general set of ideas that guide action" (p. xii), and that it profoundly affects the conduct of the research. In their own words, "Theory is pragmatically bound up with the activities of planning a study, gaining entry into the field, recording observations, conducting interviews, sifting through documents, and writing up research" (p. xiv). Equally Schwandt, in Flinders and Mills (1993), argues that it is "prior theoretical commitments and conceptual schemes" that guide the enquiry (p. 9).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001, cited by Anfara & Mertz 2006:xxv) discuss the criteria for a good and useful theory as follows: (1) a theory should provide a simple explanation of the observed relations relevant to a phenomenon, (2) it must be consistent with both the observed relations and an already established body of knowledge, (3) it is considered a tentative explanation and should provide means for verification and revision, and (4) it should stimulate further research in areas that need investigation. Mertz & Anfara (2006:192) themselves argue that a theoretical framework has the following advantages: (1) it has the ability to focus a study, (2) reveal and conceal meaning and understanding, (3) situate the research in a scholarly conversation and provide a vernacular, and (4) reveal its strengths and weaknesses.

Naturally, no theoretical framework adequately describes or explains a phenomenon (Fowler 2006). It becomes either too reductionistic, stripping the phenomenon of its complexity and interest (Mutch 2006), or too deterministic forcing the researcher to “fit” the data into predetermined categories (Harris 2006). Yet, the use of theory increases rigour and makes qualitative research more understandable (Goetz & LeCompte 1984). Theories also allow the intense, specific data collection and contextualized interpretations and conclusions prominent in qualitative research to speak to broader issues and conceptual formulations (see Mills & Bettis 2006:83).

Following in the footsteps of these qualitative researchers, I introduce a theoretical background that seeks to establish a foundational structure by which to understand the complex processes of refugee adaptation. The chapter will also enable me to focus the study, and to situate my research, as per Mertz & Anfara (2006:192), in a “scholarly conversation”.

There are four major theoretical orientations that I feel are particularly suited to the study of refugee adaptation: assimilation (Glazer & Moynihan 1963; Greeley 1974; Glazer 1993; Alba & Nee 1997 2003; Waters & Jimenez

2005), segmented assimilation (Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes 1995; Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006), the theory of ethnic social relations (Zhu & Bankston 1998), and ethnic origins hypothesis (Hein 2006). In general, no one theoretical approach provides all the answers. Instead, they each contribute to the understanding of immigrants' experience (see Heron 2001:121).

Granted that some or all of these paradigms can be used 'to structure the study' (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003:23), all the same I still believe that the theory of segmented assimilation is best suited to providing us with special insights into the unique ecological experiences and adaptive (or maladaptive) responses of Somali refugee children growing up in poor urban neighbourhoods across Britain. What follows is a lucid exposition of each perspective in turn.

Assimilation theory

The oldest perspective on immigrant adaptation, according to Jeremy Hein (1995:2), is the assimilation model which traces its roots to the works of sociologists at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly W. I. Thomas, Ernest W. Burgess, Robert E. Park, and Louis Wirth. In the view of these theorists, assimilation predicted that, over time and across generations, the descendants of immigrants will become more similar to natives – perhaps becoming indistinguishable from the general population (Jean Bacon 1996:5). The process occurred within a concrete physical space: urban neighborhoods that together defined the “natural areas” of the city (Massey 2004:4), and was also inextricably bound up with broader processes of segregation and integration (Alba & Nee 2003).

Under the influence of Talcott Parsons and other functionalists of the 1940s and 1950s, according to Douglas Massey, assimilation theory was systematically reformulated in ways that dropped the original emphasis on space and two-way accommodation. This reformulation began with Lloyd

Warner and Leo Srole's 1945 *Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* and received its canonical expression in Milton Gordon's 1964 *Assimilation in American Life*. For functionalists, Massey goes on to say, assimilation became something that occurred aspatially in "society," and movement was always toward Anglo-American values and behaviors. If assimilation was at times incomplete, this reflected the inherent "social distance" between some groups and Anglo Americans, yielding an ordering of groups with respect to social distance that bore a remarkable resemblance to the racial hierarchies that were then widely embedded in U.S. society (Massey 2004:4).

In rejecting the functionalist theory of assimilation as racist and discriminatory, scholars in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Glazer & Moynihan 1963; Novak 1972; Greeley 1974) began to stress the resilience of immigrant cultures and pointed to the remarkable persistence of ethnicity as opposed to assimilation theory's supposed prediction of Anglo conformity and cultural absorption.

In their seminal book *Remaking the American Mainstream*, Alba & Nee (2003) describe the disjuncture between the prevailing wisdom of 1970s critics and the seemingly inescapable indicators of assimilation they found in their research. Although ethnicity did not disappear, even in the third or fourth generations, Alba & Nee contend, its meaning and expression changed dramatically as Euro-Americans moved into "the twilight of ethnicity" (in Alba's well-known turn of phrase). Among the descendants of European immigrants, they say, markers of ethnicity became symbolic options rather than ascribed social categories imposed by endogamy, segregation, and economic marginality. Even though southern and eastern European immigrants may not have become WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) suitable for nomination to the local country club, they had been changed by America and America had been changed by them. Over time, according to Alba & Nee, the two grew together to create a distinctively American "mainstream" culture and society (Massey 2004:408).

In her innovative work on black West Indian immigrants in the United States, Mary Waters (1999) contends that the "old line" assimilation model of cultural and social assimilation moving in lockstep with socioeconomic success is no longer correct. Class mobility for immigrants and their children is no longer associated with increasing Americanization for all groups. Some immigrants and their children become "American" in their identity and cultural behaviors and do not do very well in the labour market, while others who remain very "ethnic" achieve high incomes and education (Portes & Zhou 1993, cited by Waters 1999:192-193).

For Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (2001:8), the basic theme in the narratives of "assimilation" and "acculturation" theories (terms often used interchangeably) that came to dominate the social sciences predicted that immigration sets in motion a process of change that is directional, indeed unilinear, nonreversible, and continuous. The direction or aim of this process was said to be "structural assimilation" (typically operationalized in terms of social relations and participation in the opportunity structure) and "acculturation" (typically operationalized in terms of language, values, and cultural identifications) into what was, implicitly or explicitly, the prize at immigration's finish line: the middle-class, white, Protestant, European American framework of the dominant society" (ibid., p. 8).

The process as it was narrated in the social-science literature, according to Suárez-Orozco, seemed to follow neatly the *van Gennepian* structural code: *separation* (from social relations and from participation in the opportunity structure of the country or culture of origin), *marginality* (residential, linguistic, economic; especially during the earlier phases of immigration and especially acute among the first generation), and, finally, a generation or two after immigration, *incorporation* into the social structures and cultural codes of the mainstream (M. Suárez-Orozco 2001:8).

Likewise, in Britain many of the early debates about race relations assumed that assimilation and integration were key objectives – that the children and grandchildren of migrants would eventually become so like the British that the only noticeable difference would be the colour of their skin (Berthoud, Modood & Smith 1997:10; Tomlinson 2004:88). Despite much racism and post-colonial hostility to settlers, according to Tomlinson, by the 1970s multiculturalism – described by Castles (2003) as the public acceptance of migrant and minority groups as communities which are distinguishable from the majority population in terms of language, culture and social behaviour – had become the most acceptable model for a future British society. A recognition of both cultural diversity and social, political and economic equality for minorities became an ideal goal, despite the persistence of racism and xenophobia (Tomlinson 2004:88).

Christian Joppke concurs with this analysis – recognition of cultural diversity in the UK, but has a different take on early debates about assimilation. In comparison to France, according to Joppke, Britain's readiness to acknowledge immigrants as ethnic minorities has deep historical roots. British nationhood has always comprised [of] various ethnicities [and Britain had] no intention of swallowing them. British nationhood was elastic, or indeterminate enough for groups of people to live apart by ethnicity or race. In Joppke's analysis, British Empire provided a pluralistic model for dealing with post-imperial immigrants. Whereas imperial France has tried to assimilate her colonies, imperial Britain had never had such pretensions. Joppke quotes Sir Ernest Barker who formulated the British approach to empire as saying: "the African native ... had better be left an African, but aided to become a better African" (Barker 1951:55, cited by Joppke 1999:224). Thus when the 'natives' moved from the periphery to the centre, notes Joppke, there was no presumption of them becoming British or English in any way (*ibid.*, p. 224).

In Conservative reading, according to Joppke, assimilation was not possible. He cites Enoch Powell's 'malicious' dictum: "the West Indian or Indian does not, by being born in England, become an Englishman. In law he becomes a United Kingdom citizen by birth. In fact he is still a West Indian or Asian" (Paul 1997, cited by Joppke 1999:225). Also in Britain assimilation was not required. Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, champion of the mid 1960s 'liberal hour' of British race relations, Joppke notes, argued that 'integration' could not mean 'the loss, by immigrants of their own national characteristics and culture'. Jenkins famously added: "I do not think that we need in this country a "melting pot" ... I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (Banton 1985:71, cited by Joppke 1999:225). In Joppke's view, "Jenkin's abdication of the 'melting pot' and Powell's 'little England' nationalism are not as opposite as they seem for they are based on the same premise of keeping immigrants and domestic society apart. However, the liberal variant of group particularism eventually won the day over its parochial competitor. [Thus] an elite-crafted, official multiculturalism became Britain's institutional solution to her New Commonwealth immigration" (ibid., p. 225).

In more recent times, the position was set out in *Full and Equal Citizens* published by the Home Office in 2000 as part of the UK government's efforts 'to promote good race relations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000'. In this and in a later document "*Integration Matters ...*" (Home Office 2005), the government commits itself to adopt 'a genuinely strategic approach to the integration of refugees in the interests of the host population and of refugees themselves.' Integration, according to these documents, is meant to be a "process that takes place when refugees are empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute to the community, and to become fully able to exercise the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents" (see Home Office 2000, 2005). The term 'integration' was earlier criticized for being vague,

slippery and merely a watered down version of assimilation (Castles et al., 2002:115-116).

In terms of critique, much of the literature on ethnic relations rejects "straight line" assimilation (a phrase borrowed from Herbert Gans) as a model burdened with ethnocentric, ideological biases that is out of touch with contemporary multicultural realities (see, *inter alia*, Metzger 1972; Blauner 1972; Lyman 1973; Wilson and Portes 1980; Wilson and Martin 1982; Portes 1984; Asante 1991; McKee 1993; Glazer 1997; Rumbaut 1997; M. Suarez-Orozco 2001).

According to Lee & Bean (2004:226), the shortcomings of this theory have partly to do with its imperfections in depicting the experiences of European migrants, but also with its inability to explain the experience of African Americans as well as today's immigrants. For instance, white European groups continued to manifest aspects of ethnic distinctiveness despite their substantial structural incorporation - a phenomenon that could not be accounted for with the straight-line assimilation model. Researchers have demonstrated, however, that much of the ethnic revival of this period was symbolic, giving rise to the concept of "symbolic ethnicity" for white ethnics (e.g., Alba 1990, Gans 1979, Waters 1990).

A second and more fundamental limitation of the classic straight-line assimilation model is its failure to account for the experience of African Americans (Lee & Bean 2004:227). Although African American customs, practices, and ideals had come to mirror those of the larger population to a considerable degree - indicating their high level of acculturation - what was still missing was successful economic incorporation (*ibid.*). Third, according to Lee & Bean (2004), the straight-line model fails to accurately characterize the incorporation pathways adopted by America's newest immigrants, such as Asians, Latinos, and West Indians. Today, social scientists conceive of not only one, but many different paths of incorporation for America's

newcomers, a perspective first articulated in Portes & Zhou's (1993) seminal article on segmented assimilation (more on this later).

Assimilation as a model of generational change, Waters tells us, makes two critical assumptions that may or may not have been true even for the white ethnic groups of Yankee City in the 1930s. First, the model assumes that "the American social system" is an undifferentiated whole. It assumes that there is *one* American culture that a child will absorb. That culture is assumed to be the upwardly mobile, self-reliant, and individualistic middle-class culture. Second, this model assumes that the "American" culture and identity are of higher social status than the immigrant culture (Waters 1999:195). In this process, say Portes & Rumbaut, old-line assimilationism undermines the very forces of parental authority and ambition that can make the difference in guiding the second generation around major obstacles to successful adaptation and productive citizenship (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:349).

Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (2001:20) talks of two broad spheres of culture: "instrumental culture" and "expressive culture." Instrumental culture represents the skills, competencies, and social behaviors that are required to make a living successfully and contribute to society. Expressive culture, on the other hand, is meant to be the realm of values, worldviews, and the patterning of interpersonal relations that give meaning and sustain the sense of self. Taken together, these qualities of culture generate shared meanings and understandings, and a sense of belonging.

While immigrant parents encourage their children to cultivate the "instrumental" aspects of culture in the new setting, according to Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, they are decidedly more ambivalent about their children's exposure to some of the "expressive" elements of culture in the new land. In his view, many immigrant parents strongly resist a whole array of cultural models and social practices in American youth

culture that they consider highly undesirable. These include cultural attitudes and behaviors that are anti-schooling ("school is boring") and anti-authority, the glorification of violence, and sexually precocious behaviors (ibid., p. 20). Many immigrant parents reject and resist this form of acculturation. Hence, in M. Suárez-Orozco's view, the incantation of many observers—"acculturate, acculturate, acculturate"—needs rethinking.

The first issue that needs airing, according to M. Suárez-Orozco, is the basic question of "acculturating to what?" In his view, American society is no longer, if it ever was, a uniform or coherent system. Given their diverse origins, financial resources, and social networks, immigrants end up gravitating toward very different sectors of American society. While some are able to join integrated well-to-do neighborhoods, in M. Suárez-Orozco's view, the majority of today's immigrants come to experience American culture from the vantage point of poor urban settings. Limited economic opportunities, toxic schools, ethnic tensions, violence, drugs, and gangs characterize many of these settings. He adds: "the structural inequalities found in what some social theorists have called "American Apartheid" (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993) are implicated in the creation of a cultural ethos of ambivalence, pessimism, and despair. Asking immigrant youths to give up their values, worldviews, and interpersonal relations to join these ethos is a formula for disaster" (M. Suárez-Orozco 2001:21).

For Hein (1995:6), the assimilation model contains several assumptions that require reconsideration. First, assimilation presumes that the host society has no relationship to the sending society and that migrants end their ties with their homeland when they leave. However, with increasing 'transnationalism' (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec 1999; Portes 2001; Levitt & Waters 2002) and the permanence of ties between immigrant children and their parents' place (or country) of birth, that assumption has no factual basis. Second, assimilation makes an overly rigid distinction

between the sending and host society. Because it focuses disproportionately on cultural change, the model inherently presents immigrants and refugees as bringing cultural values, norms, and institutions with them to a host society. The image is one of migrants transplanting their culture from one society to another as if transported in suitcases and brought out like ethnic garb at the appropriate occasion. Reconstruction is a more accurate description of the formation of ethnic institutions within immigrant and refugee communities (Hein 1995:6).

A third feature of the assimilation model, according to Hein (1995:6-7), is its focus on the adaptation of the immigrant as an individual, particularly how he or she differs from who they were upon arrival. The individual needs to be studied when tracing the intersection of immigrant adaptation and the life course – the sequence of social experiences entailed by human development from birth to death. However, one of the most important insights into the lives of immigrants and refugees is the collective dimension of their adaptation (Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Refugees and immigrants belong to households, families, and communities, and analysis of their adaptation ought to focus on these networks. Charles Tilly encapsulates this consensus in one of his trademark gnomic aphorisms: "Networks migrate; categories stay put; and networks create new categories" (Tilly 1990: 84, cited by Hein 2006:241).

Fourth, according to Hein, implicit in the assimilation model is the premise that the United States has a core culture for migrants to integrate into – presumably that of whites of European ancestry, as they are the majority of the population. This assumption is inconsistent with the realities of contemporary urban America, and the presence of non-European populations was more important in shaping the refugees' adaptation than was contact with whites of European ancestry (Hein 1995:7).

A final feature of the assimilation model, in Hein's view, is the image of Americanization as a voluntary process that increases the more immigrants

become like natives. This portrayal does not account well for the extreme intolerance that many immigrants experience (ibid., p. 8). Research shows that immigrants' perception of discrimination and conception of themselves as an ethnic minority are strongest among those who should be the most assimilated, such as immigrants with more education and longer residence (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006).

Indeed, as Alba & Nee (two leading proponents of the concept of assimilation) put it: "Assimilation, even if it expands to embrace non-Europeans, is unlikely to dissolve racial distinctions entirely in the United States and to end the inequalities rooted in them. Assimilation, therefore, provides no reason to end the struggle against the power of racism" (Alba & Nee 2003:292).

Lastly, a practical difficulty in testing this hypothesis is ambiguity about the time frame of assimilation: will it occur during the careers of early arrivals, or will it become apparent only with the transition to a second generation, or will it require the passage of several generations? (Logan & Alba 2000:101).

The theory of segmented assimilation

The theory of 'segmented assimilation' (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes 1995) is the most important innovation in research on immigrants since Milton Gordon's (1964) *Assimilation in American Life* (Hein 2006: 231). Its principal contribution is to explain the influence of parental human capital and modes of incorporation as they affect the formation of immigrant communities and the lives of young people living in them (Portes & Rumbaut 2006: 27).

Central to this theory is the proposition that assimilation is not a uniform and straightforward process (Rumbaut & Portes 2001:5). It now has three

main variants, depending on the segment of society to which immigrants assimilate (Vermuelen 2002:598).

In the first variant, according to Rumbaut & Portes (2001:303), high human capital among immigrant parents combines with a relatively neutral or favorable context of reception to produce rapid mobility into the middle class. These families possess the necessary wherewithal to support an advanced education for their children. At the same time, the very success of achieving a comfortable middle-class lifestyle often leads to conflict between parents bent on maintaining their traditional values and ambitions and their thoroughly acculturated offspring (*ibid.*, p. 303).

In the second variant, socioeconomic success depends less on advanced educational credentials in the first generation than on the possession of entrepreneurial skills and a favorable context of reception that facilitates the construction of solidary ethnic communities. Although immigrant parents may not reach advanced professional positions, their success at small business, combined with dense social networks, provides a supportive environment for the educational and occupational advancement of the second generation. In these instances, parental authority is buttressed by co-ethnic ties, leading to a more paced process of acculturation and less social distance between generations (Rumbaut & Portes 2001:303).

In the third variant, a number of immigrant groups combine little professional or entrepreneurial skills with an unfavorable governmental and societal reception. The challenges of adaptation to a foreign environment, considerable to begin with, are magnified by the hostility of the surrounding environment. Poverty is the lot of most immigrants in this situation and, with it, regular exposure to the lifestyles and outlooks of the most downtrodden segments of the native population. Children of these immigrant families seldom have the opportunity to assimilate into middle-class American circles but every opportunity to do so into those of the native poor and the underclass. This occurs at the same time that the

economic and social difficulties faced by their families prevent the emergence of well-structured ethnic communities capable of reinforcing parental authority. Downward rather than upward assimilation is a real possibility for children growing up under these conditions (*ibid.*, p. 303-304).

According to Rumbaut & Portes (2001:6), why this is so—and how it is that different groups may come to assimilate into different sectors of American society—is a complex story that hinges on a number of factors, among which the following can be considered decisive: (1) the history of the immigrant first generation, including the human capital brought by immigrant parents and the context of their reception; (2) the differential pace of acculturation among parents and children, including the development of language gaps between them, and its bearing on normative integration and family cohesiveness; (3) the cultural and economic barriers confronted by second-generation youth in their quest for successful adaptation; and (4) the family and community resources for confronting these barriers (see also Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001, 2006).

The three variants of assimilation are fostered by three corresponding forms of acculturation (Vermuelen 2002:598) or a typology of intergenerational relations in immigrant families (Rumbaut & Portes 2001:307). These are known as consonant acculturation, dissonant acculturation, and selective acculturation (Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes & Rumbaut 1996). In the first case, parents can support their children in the process of acculturation since they more or less go through it together. In the second case, parents with little human capital cannot keep up with the process of acculturation of their children. They tend to lose control over them and a process of role reversal between parents and children may occur. Dissonant acculturation promotes downward assimilation. In the case of selective acculturation, the co-ethnic community is of critical importance. It supports parental control, reduces the likelihood of parent-child conflicts and retards the process of

acculturation which takes a selective character. Parts of the parental culture and language are maintained while the new culture is learned (Vermuelen 2002:598).

“Segmented assimilation theory” has been labeled as the most prominent neo-assimilationist approach. What is “segmented,” according to Wimmer (2007), are the pathways of immigrant incorporation (confusingly still called “assimilation”). Two new outcomes are added to the tableau. First, ethnic communities/identities/cultures may persist over time and allow individuals to achieve upward social mobility without having to develop social ties with mainstreamers, without having to acculturate to mainstream culture, and without necessarily identifying with the national majority. Besides this ethnic enclave mode of immigrant incorporation, there is a “downward assimilation” path where immigrants develop social ties with, identify with, and acculturate to the black segment of American society, rather than the “white mainstream” (Wimmer 2007:5). Nonetheless, in Wimmer’s view, “the basic analytical scheme of “old” assimilation theory is maintained: It is ethnic communities/cultures/categories conceived as a Herderian whole that move along the three possible paths of assimilation, and it is ethnic communities/cultures/categories that end up either in the mainstream, the ethnic enclave, or the stigmatized world of black America” (ibid., p. 5).

The main criticism leveled at this theory is that, because it fits so squarely within the status-attainment tradition, it centers on individual mobility and assumes the necessity of immigrants fitting into a preexisting hierarchy (Hernández & Glenn 2003:419). It therefore pays little or no heed to questions of political organizing and group empowerment, nor to ways in which immigrant cultures can challenge American individualism (ibid. p. 419). Culture, as well as history and politics in the homeland, shape social ties in immigrant communities, according to Jeremy Hein (2006:232), but the effects of immigrants' cultures are not addressed by segmented assimilation theory.

It is also suggested that the model exaggerates the solidarity in ethnic communities. Many agree that immigrants and refugees of the same ethnicity vary widely in their social, political, and class backgrounds (Hein 1995:8). These cleavages often yield economic exploitation among community members, as well as “contentious, stratified, and segmented communities that resist unification” (Gold 1992:230). Moreover, the very institutions in refugee communities that provide members with support are, paradoxically, the same ones that become sites of intense conflict over power, resources, and cultural change (Hein 1995:8).

The value of this model lies, according to Alba & Nee, in its demonstration that assimilation into the mainstream is not the only possible form of assimilation. Other than that, segmented assimilation hinges on assumptions that are not unproblematic. One is that racial boundaries will remain inflexible and nearly impermeable. In the view of Alba & Nee (2003:162), this has not been true historically and it is unlikely to prove true in the near future because: “assimilation will modify boundaries by “blurring” them; this possibility is foreshadowed in the already high rates of intermarriage involving the U.S.-born generations of new immigrant groups and in the residential assimilation of their middle-class, linguistically acculturated members” (see also Perlmann & Waldinger 1997).

Critics have also pointed out that the causal link between assimilation into the underclass and development of “oppositional cultures” among immigrant children is questionable (Xie & Greenman 2005:6). In this context, Perlmann and Waldinger (1997: 915) argue that second generation rebellion was not uncommon among earlier European groups, but that it did not ultimately hinder the upward mobility of these groups in later generations. They further suggest that if today’s second generation does develop an “oppositional culture,” it is no more likely to result from the process of

assimilation into the American underclass than to arise spontaneously out of the immigrant working class experience (Xie & Greenman 2005:6).

Alba (2005), for instance, presents evidence that Maghrebin immigrants in France experience a trajectory of disengagement from school, troubles with police, and unemployment that is very similar to the type of “downward assimilation” posited by segmented assimilation theory. But this occurs despite the fact that the contextual elements that gave rise to segmented assimilation theory – inner city ghettos and a harsh regime of racial exclusion – are absent in France. The Maghrebins lack the opportunity to be acculturated into a minority urban underclass, and yet they still experience worsening outcomes over time (Xie & Greenman 2005:6).

Another critique of segmented assimilation theory addresses the relative advantages and disadvantages of deliberately limiting assimilation and maintaining strong ethnic social ties. The segmented assimilation hypothesis suggests that such limited assimilation will have a protective effect for contemporary immigrants, allowing them to achieve better outcomes than if they were to assimilate fully (e.g., Zhou & Bankston 1998; Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006; Rumbaut & Portes 2001).

However, Dewind and Kasinitz (1997) raise the possibility that avoidance of incorporation into the U.S. mainstream may have costs as well as benefits. For instance, lack of social ties outside the ethnic community may restrict immigrants’ knowledge of the full range of available opportunities. Strong ties within the community may also burden them with excessive obligations toward relatives and other co-ethnics. These disadvantages could potentially outweigh the benefits posited by segmented assimilation theory (Xie & Greenman 2005:6). In order to succeed in American society, according to Alba and Nee (2003), it is functionally necessary to assimilate, regardless of whether or not immigrant families intend to.

The claims about the benefits of ethnic enclave economies for workers

have also been challenged by research which shows that the principal economic benefits flow to owners rather than to employees of enclave firms (Alba & Nee 2003:164). Moreover, not all niches encompass "good" jobs that individuals would be happy to keep if they had alternatives. This seems especially true of many immigrant niches, such as in the ethnic restaurant or garment industries, both of which usually provide low pay. In the words of Alba & Nee (2003:165-166), "ethnic loyalty may entail a cost where niche employment is concerned". Besides, most immigrant niches hold little attraction for the second generation, assuming that its members find the mainstream economy open to them (ibid., p. 166).

Finally, segmented assimilation theory has been criticized for "essentializing central-city black culture in the image of the underclass" (Alba and Nee 2003: 8). A variety of cultural models are found among urban African Americans, some doing well and others performing poorly (e.g., Jencks 1992; Patterson 1998; Anderson 2000). It is thus naive to think that assimilation into native minority culture is necessarily downward assimilation into the underclass. In fact, Neckerman, Carter, and Lee (1999) suggest that immigrants may well assimilate into the black middle class, a possibility overlooked by proponents of segmented assimilation theory (cited by Xie & Greenman 2005:6).

The theory of ethnic social relations

In an attempt to explain why some Vietnamese young people become underachievers or even gang members while others succeed beyond all expectations, Zhou & Bankston (1998:227) developed a theory of ethnic social relations. This theory looks at the relationships young people have with their families, their ethnic community, the local social environment, and the larger American society. According to these authors, the varied adaptational outcomes of Vietnamese youths in the extremes of "valedic-

torians" and "delinquents" are based on how they fit into their own families, how their families fit into the ethnic community, how the ethnic community fits into the local social environment, and how their own community and the local social environment fit into the larger American society (ibid., p. 227).

Zhou & Bankston (1998) tested this theory during their study in Versailles Village, Ohio, and found that Vietnamese young people tend to show high levels of community involvement which is in turn positively related to school performance. They also found that the development of advanced Vietnamese language skills, notably literacy, was associated with high levels of academic achievement, the amount of effort spent on schoolwork, and aspirations for future education. Moreover, Vietnamese literacy was found to be highly correlated with identification with Vietnamese ethnicity with the implication that students with advanced Vietnamese language skills were more tightly bound to the social network of the ethnic community than students without such skills (ibid., p. 228).

The theory offers a description of the connection between ethnic social structures and 'mainstream society' (Healey 2007:40). Ideally, according to Zhou & Bankston (1998:229), families integrate their members into the surrounding environment and the surrounding environment integrates them into the larger society. Contemporary American society, however, contains marginalized segments affected by poverty and multiple risks. In this situation, Zhou & Bankston indicate, the ethnic community acts as an alternative to the marginalized segment of the society. Through their families, young people become part of the ethnic community, and the ethnic community enables them to bypass the troubled, marginalized neighborhood that surrounds them and to concentrate on the chief opportunity offered to them: public schooling (ibid., p. 229).

Those children who fail to be integrated into the ethnic community, according to these researchers, the alternative is to be assimilated into the disadvantaged youth culture where adolescents learn the behaviour and

attitudes of their marginalized peers and then become "part of the wrong part of America" (ibid., p. 229). Once young people are culturally assimilated into the native youth society, in the view of these theorists, they are recognized as "bad kids." The ethnic community often responds by labeling them and locking them into their status as delinquents. In this context, while these ethnic relationships can provide means of upward mobility to those who meet with approval, they can also serve to exclude some young people as outsiders (ibid., p. 229). According to Zhou & Bankston (1998:230), an ethnic identity serves as a basis of solidarity in Vietnamese communities. Young people who act in ways that are seen as "non-Vietnamese" threaten this solidarity and the collective project of adaptation to American society.

According to this theory, the main elements of Vietnamese success are traditional value orientation of dedication to the expectations of others brought from the home country, parental aspirations for upward mobility, and an ethnic system of social relations to enforce these expectations and aspirations (Zhou & Bankston 1998:230). In the process of exile and resettlement, Vietnamese elders have formed close, mutually dependent social networks that offer control and support. Cultural values brought from Vietnam have aided in the formation of these networks, and cultural values have helped ethnic networks to bind young people closer to their families and to their ethnic communities (ibid., p. 230).

Zhou & Bankston (1998) emphasize that ethnicity is not simply an ascribed category, but an identity rooted in distinctive patterns of social relationships. Because ethnic communities consist of individuals and their families cooperating with one another to achieve goals, according to these authors, ethnicity is a form of social capital. Integration through families into Vietnamese communities, the theory goes, provides an alternative to assimilation into the most disadvantaged segments of American society. Ethnicity in this case is not simply a source of advantage; it provides an alternative to ghettoization (ibid., p. 230).

In my view, the theory of ethnic social relations is very much similar to segmented assimilation in that it 'considers ethnicity as a form of social capital'. Like segmented assimilation, it advocates 'networks of ties among co-ethnics' and 'the preservation of certain key elements in the immigrant culture, of which language is paramount' (ibid., 1998:228) as a much more viable way for the successful integration of immigrant minorities and for the utilization of their capabilities. It may not be as robust as segmented assimilation, but it is very much like it, and hence the same criticisms levelled against the latter above would apply to it.

Ethnic origins hypothesis

The ethnic-origins hypothesis arises out of Jeremy Hein's study of the adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong refugees in four American cities (Hein 2006). It posits that when immigrants arrive in a host society, they begin a process of racial and ethnic adaptation. During this re-socialization, according to Hein, immigrants must cope with new identities and inequalities that are based on perceived physical and cultural differences. To interpret host-society patterns of diversity, immigrants draw upon preexisting conceptualizations of social relations and peoplehood, which Hein terms as immigrants' ethnic origins (Hein 2006:40).

According to Hein, some immigrants think of ethnic boundaries as porous and fluid and for them ethnic identities are liminal. Others assume that ethnic boundaries are hermetic and rigid; they think of ethnic identities as polarized. In Hein's view, multiple experiences in immigrants' homelands shape how they situate ethnic boundaries and evaluate ethnic identities. For instance, historical developments determine whether or not they have a nation-state and how minority and dominant groups lay claims to national institutions. Political cleavages divide people into competing groups in ways that reinforce or alter

racial and ethnic boundaries. Religious values and kinship norms create assumptions about discretion and collective commitments to spiritual aspirations and social networks (*ibid.*, p. 41). Once immigrants arrive in a host society, notes Hein, these preexisting boundaries and identities influence how they adapt to new ones.

For instance, according to Hein, the ethnic-origins hypothesis predicts that a group with ethnic origins like those of the Hmong (hermetic boundary and polarized identity) will have a looser affiliation with Asian pan-ethnicity and a weaker affinity for U.S. citizenship than a group with ethnic origins like those of Cambodians (porous boundaries and liminal identities). Similarly, the hypothesis predicts that awareness of inequality, such as the prevalence of institutional discrimination, will be greater for a group like the Hmong than for a group like Cambodians. Finally, the hypothesis predicts that a group with ethnic origins similar to the Hmong's will display a higher propensity to mobilize and engage in collective action to combat inequality than a group with ethnic origins like those of Cambodians. In Hein's view, these are plausible hypotheses given the histories, politics, and cultures of the Khmer in Cambodia and the Hmong in Laos (*ibid.*, p. 41).

The concept of ethnic origins, in Hein's view, proffers resolutions for a range of meta-theoretical problems in the fields of immigration, race, and ethnicity and ways of improving public policy in these areas. Four of the most prominent challenges concern aggregate names, balancing analysis of race with ethnicity, primordial versus constructionist conceptions of ethnicity, and a materialist bias in research on immigrants (Hein 2006: 237). For instance, it is suggested that the tendency to fit immigrants into categories such as black, white, Hispanic, or Asian ignores important ethnic differences among specific groups, and leads to improper generalizations and inaccurate evaluations (*ibid.*, p. 237). In the view of Hein, the concept ethnic origins resolves this problem by analyzing how immigrants use their homeland history, politics, and culture to understand their experiences in American

society (ibid., p. 239).

The ethnic origins hypothesis has one huge limitation. According to Hein, this theory is most applicable to first-generation immigrants, and not to the second generation — the immigrants' native-born children (ibid., p. 245).

Which conceptual framework, and why?

Of the four theories discussed above, the theory of segmented assimilation captures some of the core aspects of refugee adaptation. The key premise of this model is that some immigrants today achieve middle-class status in the first generation, drawing on high levels of human capital and a favourable mode of incorporation. The offspring of these immigrants will thus integrate rapidly into the American middle and upper classes by graduating from college and entering high status occupations. In the process, they can reduce ethnic distinctions, often turning them into a voluntary option (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:263).

The key premise of this model is that some immigrants today achieve middle-class status in the first generation, drawing on high levels of human capital and a favourable mode of incorporation. The offspring of these immigrants will thus integrate rapidly into the American middle and upper classes by graduating from college and entering high status occupations. In the process, they can reduce ethnic distinctions, often turning them into a voluntary option (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:263).

Other immigrants never manage to rise above the working class, but their families are sufficiently strong and their communities sufficiently cohesive to support parental aspirations and steer children away from pitfalls endangering their progress through the educational system. Such youths can also achieve the necessary credentials, while maintaining strong social ties with their families and communities of origin (ibid., p. 263).

Finally, there are those youths for whom ethnicity would be neither a badge of pride nor a social convenience but a mark of subordination. These are usually the offspring of working class immigrants when a negative mode of incorporation has prevented the development of strong and protective ethnic communities. Such children are at risk of joining the most disadvantaged minorities at the bottom of society. This path is labeled *downward assimilation* because, in this case, learning the cultural ways of the host society does not lead to upward mobility but, instead, to exactly the opposite (ibid., p. 263-64).

From these three possibilities, the literature on refugees in the UK suggests that the third route is the most likely outcome for Somali youngsters. There is evidence that young Somali people struggle to find their way in society because of structural disadvantages, exclusion and neglect, and that their transition to adulthood is not only prolonged and fractured, in common with the transitions of other young people, but also particularly constrained (Griffiths 2002; Harris 2004; Rutter 2006; Hudson et al., 2007). While individual circumstances vary, the combined effects of racialisation, migration, ethnicity, gender and class continue to shape the lives of many young Somali origin people and restrict their opportunities (compare Enneli, Modood, & Bradley 2005). Following this argument, I suggest that Somali young people's lives will be constrained, as measured by academic performance and labour market outcomes.

The concept of segmented assimilation can be redefined empirically as a set of strategic outcomes in the lives of young children of immigrants. One such outcome is educational attainment, in terms of both completed years of education and whether the person is still in further and/or higher education. A second includes employment, occupation, and income; a third, language use and preferences. Downward assimilation is associated with *dropping out of education, having no job*, bearing children prematurely, and going to prison for a crime (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:274; Italics are mine).

Figure 2.1 above presents a theoretical model of the segmented assimilation process by connecting parental factors, modes of incorporation, family contexts, and intergenerational acculturation, to the ways in which children of immigrants confront these barriers. According to Feliciano (2006:135), the term “modes of incorporation” refers to governmental policies towards the reception of newcomers, racial prejudices of the receiving society, strengths of existing co-ethnic community, and the economic conditions of immigrants.

The expectation is that typical assimilation outcomes for children in these varying situations will flow naturally from the interaction between external challenges, family and community resources, and patterns of acculturation (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:62). Concerning the latter, Portes & Rumbaut (1996) developed a typology of intergenerational relations in immigrant families to distinguish three principal paths of second-generation adaptation. *Consonant acculturation* occurs as parents and children learn the language and culture at approximately the same pace and adjust their behavior accordingly. *Dissonant acculturation* takes place when children's learning of English and introjection into American cultural outlooks so exceed their parents' as to leave the latter hopelessly behind. *Selective acculturation* is marked by a paced learning of the host culture along with retention of significant elements of the culture of origin, resulting in fluent bilingualism in the second generation (see also Portes and Zhou 1993). The external obstacles faced by the second-generation include racial discrimination, bifurcated labour markets, and inner-city subcultures with the expected outcomes ranging from downward assimilation to upward mobility combined with biculturalism (Rumbaut & Portes 2001: 301-317).

I use this model as a broad framework to guide my analysis in later chapters and as a point of reference for key empirical results.

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Caveats on the use of an American model in Britain

Several reasonable objections can be raised about the use of an American conceptual model, namely segmented assimilation, in Britain. One is that Britain has no neighbourhood ghettos¹⁴ that correspond to the situation in the United States (Dorling & Thomas 2004; Finney & Simpson 2009). Whereas segregation interacts with a variety of structural transformations in US society to determine the spatial concentration of poverty among the poorest segments of subjugated racialized groups (mostly blacks and Hispanics) (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993; Marcuse 1997; Johnston et al. 2003), Britain's history and contemporary experience with minority ethnic groups remains distinct from that in the United States (Berube 2006:23). At the very least, American ghetto model of hypersegregation is not present in Britain (Peach 1996:232).

A counter argument would be that Britain is increasingly segregated by inequality, poverty, wealth and opportunity (Dorling & Thomas 2004:56-57). There are shocking statistics concerning segregation directly by the state, according to Dorling (2005). In some areas, African-Caribbean boys are up to fifteen times more likely to be excluded from school than are white boys, and up to twelve times more likely to be incarcerated in prison (see also the Reach report, 2007). Children and young people are being segregated out of classrooms and disproportionately into prisons by ethnicity in the UK (Dorling 2005). In terms of poverty, according to a recent report (Dorling et al., 2007), poor and wealthy households in Britain are becoming more and more segregated as the UK faces the highest inequality levels for 40 years. Breadline poverty levels are rising and socioeconomic and geographical polarization is increasing (ibid., p. xiv). There are stark differences in rates of poverty according to ethnic group, and all identified minority ethnic groups had higher rates of poverty than the average for the population (Platt 2007; Kenway & Palmer 2007).

In the case of asylum seekers and refugees who are the subject of this

study, impoverishment and depletion of resources may have taken place suddenly and under extreme or traumatic circumstances. They may be faced with little or no knowledge of the society in which they have found themselves and with restricted means of communication (Milbourne 2002: 287-88). Moreover, refugees had tended to be dispersed to areas with higher levels of deprivation and vacant housing (Anie et al., 2005:7), where they were more likely to suffer racial assaults and harassment (Pearl & Zetter 2002; Schuster 2003; Phillips 2006). The schools located in these low-income neighbourhoods also become concentrations of disadvantage and resentment (Furstenberg et al., 1998; Johnson 1999; Chapman & Harris 2004; Lupton 2005).

In these circumstances, that the refugees and their children maintain 'their connection to their culture and to each other' (Keown-Bomar 2004; Wierzbicki 2004) is a basic tenet of the segmented assimilation perspective. Ethnicity, in this case, can be a relative advantage for young immigrants or refugees when the ethnic group provides an alternative to the "oppositional culture" (Ogbu 1978, 1991, 1998, 2003) of low-income neighbourhoods. Immigrant ethnicity, in other words, can provide an alternative to assimilating into disadvantaged segments of modern society (Zhou & Bankston 1998:236).

A second caveat: in America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance that can overwhelm the influence of class background, religion, or language (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:47). Hertz (2004) demonstrates that the persistence in intergenerational poverty in the US is very closely associated with race (cited by Berube 2006:14). Poor black children in the U. S. are significantly more likely to be poor adults than are poor white children (ibid., p. 14). Some have suggested that a racial gradient continues to exist in U.S. culture so that the darker a person's skin, the greater is the social distance from dominant groups and the more difficult it is to make his or her personal qualifications count (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:47). That is why, the argument goes, 'a range of adaptation', rather

than assimilation, in the context of 'today's "new", mainly non-European immigration' in the USA (Gans 1997: 875) has been proposed.

The inadequacy of this proviso is that a similar dynamic is operating in the UK, which today ranks second only to the United States among industrialized Western nations in standard measures of income inequality (Berube 2006:14). Racism and racial discrimination permeate many aspects of society in the UK (Bulmer & Solomos 1999, 2004; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Gilroy 2002; Solomos 2003).¹⁵ Historically, British racism has two main strands: cultural and biological, and has its roots in imperialism, anti-Muslim hostility and the slave trade, and in often strident opposition to immigration (Runnymede Trust 2000:75). In fact, one could argue that attempts to define Britain and 'Britishness' depend on a static notion of who lives in and contributes to national identity. The same debates in the USA on the definition of 'American' have more recent precedent for adopting a pluralist view of the contribution of immigrants to an emerging changing national culture (Goodwin-White 2006).

As for racial discrimination, Karlsen and Nazroo (2002:624) identify three aspects of the structural context of ethnicity: (1) the effect of the accumulation of disadvantage over the life course; (2) the role of ecological effects, produced by the concentration of ethnic minority groups in deprived residential areas; and (3) the effects of living in a racist society. In this context, ethnic minority groups in the UK continue to experience higher unemployment rates (Heath 2001; Dustmann & Theodoropoulos 2006), greater concentrations in routine and semi-routine work and lower hourly earnings than do members of the comparison group of British and other whites (Heath & Cheung 2006).

It is in this context that immigrants and refugees need to maximize their 'ties, traditional networks and relations of trust and reciprocity' (Coutts et al., 2007:34). These ties constitute a source of "social capital" (Portes 1998), providing social structures that facilitate action, in this case the search for

jobs and the acquisition of skills and other resources needed to move up the economic ladder (Waldinger 2005:34). Networks tying veterans to newcomers allow for rapid transmission of information about openings in workplaces or opportunities for new business start-ups. They also provide better information within workplaces, reducing the risks associated with initial hiring, and similarly connecting co-ethnic entrepreneurs, who take membership in the community as an index of trust (*ibid.*, p. 343).

The evidence from the literature is that homogenous communities have higher levels of social interactions, which in turn leads to more social capital (e.g., Alesina & Ferrara 2000; Costa & Kahn 2003). Social capital, grounded in intact families and community networks, provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:266). That is the world view of the segmented assimilation model, and it is equally valid whether one is trying to adjust to society in America or in the UK.

A more practical caveat than the issues of racism and ghettos concerns the polarization of the Somali community itself. Because the community is divided and 'segmented along clan lines' (e.g., Griffiths 2002; Harris 2004), the arguments goes, they may not be able to generate adequate ethnic solidarity and cooperation. Hence their young people may not be able to develop and maintain a strong ethnic identity and culture congruent with educational and economic success, but also resist all the negative neighbourhood cultural and identity influences (for more on the dynamics of the Somali community, see chap. 1).

The analysis above characterises ethnic culture, or ethnicity for that matter, as being solely primordial. A primordial approach to culture would argue that values and norms are invariant. However, according to Hein (2006:33-34), ethnic origins are dynamic, not perpetual, because they result from the interaction of cultural and noncultural factors. Among immigrants, he adds,

values and norms emerge from the group's adaptation to historical and structural conditions both prior to and after migration.

There is already evidence of segmented assimilation by the Somali community in the UK. According to Rutter (2006:182), if US experiences of segmented assimilation have any relevance in the UK, the presence of enclaves such as Stratford Road in Birmingham or the 'Granby triangle' in Liverpool may provide the means by which Somali values are transmitted. Children who grow up in the presence of moderate Somali success, in the presence of employed role models, may have more positive educational experiences. Greater 'integration', in Rutter's view, may be achieved through a period of greater separation (ibid., p. 182).

Lastly, the dilemma for earlier immigrants consisted of assimilating to 'mainstream culture (Alba & Nee 1997:864)' - in the process sacrificing their cultural heritage versus taking refuge in the ethnic community from the challenges of the outside world (Portes 1995:75). In the contemporary context of segmented assimilation, the options have become less clear. Because the white majority is very substantially separated from other ethnic groups both in the UK and in the US (Johnston, Forrest & Poulsen 2002: 209), children of non-white immigrants may not even have the opportunity to gain access to middle class white society, no matter how acculturated they become (Portes 1995:75). Joining those native circles to which they do have access may prove a ticket to permanent subordination and disadvantage. Remaining securely ensconced in their co-ethnic community may, under these circumstances, not be a symptom of escapism but the best strategy for capitalizing on an otherwise unavailable material and moral resources. *Whether one is adjusting to a new society in America or in the UK*, a strategy of paced, selective assimilation may prove the best course for immigrant minorities (ibid., p. 75; italics are mine).

Conclusion

How refugee adaptation is conceptualized has been and continues to be hotly debated. The old assimilationist perspective that conceptualized adaptation as a linear and progressively irreversible process that leads to the reduction of cultural heterogeneity and convergence in patterns of language, thinking, feeling, and behaviour is no longer acceptable (Zhou 2001:198). Instead, the emphasis today is on the connections that bind the newcomers together and the resources generated by the contacts that crisscross the immigrant communities (Waldinger 2005:343). These ties constitute a source of “social capital,” providing social structures that facilitate action so that immigrants and their children can draw socioeconomic advantages from ethnic solidarity and from the group’s cultural and socioeconomic resources (*ibid.*, p. 343).

In this chapter, I have identified four theories, namely assimilation, segmented assimilation, the theory of ethnic social relations, and ethnic origins hypothesis. Whilst no one theoretical approach provides all the answers required to understanding the experience of immigrants (see Heron 2001:121), I believe the key concepts in segmented assimilation are useful analytically and are meaningful precisely because they capture the essence of most aspects of refugee adaptation. I therefore commit this theory to my research. Lastly, several reasonable objections that can be raised about my use of an American conceptual model in a British context have been put forward and fully explored.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN & PROCEDURES

This thesis is based on data from three distinct but complementary small-scale qualitative research projects. In the first one, I conducted interviews with ten Somali refugee parents (6 mothers and 4 fathers) across London in 1997 to understand how their experiences and attitudes framed the immediate environment of their children (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2001). I found then that the narratives of these parents were defined by their acute flight experiences from a war-torn country, and what sociologist Ruben Rumbaut called “the oppressive load imposed by the sheer need to survive ... despite the barriers of poverty, prejudice, minority status, pervasive uncertainty, and culture shock” (Rumbaut 1985:435-36, cited by Freeman 1989:11). This is the primary source for parts of the data reported in *Chapters 4 & 10*.

In a second round of fieldwork conducted between Nov. 2008 to March 2009, I re-interviewed almost all the original interviewee parents and, in two cases, their spouses. I view this long-delayed follow-up part of the research as the ‘longitudinal qualitative’ element of the study (e.g., Saldaña 2003; Neale & Flowerdew 2003). Qualitative *longitudinal* research is predicated on the investigation and interpretation of change over time and process in social contexts (Holland, Thomson & Henderson 2006:5). According to Salaff (2004:238), “some studies are planned at the outset to be longitudinal, others just happen to become longitudinal”. Indeed this element of my study just happens to be longitudinal because I broke off from the course in 1998 before the research was completed.

I then tracked as many of these parents as possible more than a decade later for follow-up interviews to understand how their situation and outlooks had changed over time (see Holland, Thomson & Henderson 2006:5), and to gauge their perceptions of the children's progress and setbacks to date (see C. Suárez-Orozco, M. Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova 2008:25). The themes that have emerged from my initial data were also reviewed with these parents for verification (see Gray 2004:320). Moreover, this project has brought up to date the existing data from my first study.

A third project, and concomitant of the above, was also undertaken to conduct up to 26 semi-structured 'in-depth interviews' (Miller & Crabtree 1999; Johnson 2002) with the now adult children of these immigrant parents 'to gain a full picture of their educational and occupational trajectories' (see Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005, p. 1111). All, except three, of these young people were the children of my original parent interviewees. The three extra young people were two males and a female. Only the two males' interview data were structured into stories, and appear in the Appendix. The young woman's data was used in the analysis chapters. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the group of young people from the original parent interviewee families. The two males come from polar opposites in terms of their adaptation trajectories. One is a hospital registrar and the other is an unemployed young man who ran away from school by age 13.

Altogether, the research reports on semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews I conducted with 40 respondents, 'whom I call informants when describing what they said to me in person' (Hein 2006:257), more than a decade apart. The total number of interviews collected from all three projects with parents and young people was 50. My informants' responses provide a wealth of quotations that form the basis of my research findings. Their answers will also allow the young people in the project and their parents to use their own words to express their experiences with schools, further and higher education institutions, employers,

communities and neighbourhoods across the city. All the data collected figure prominently in my analysis and discussion of these issues, and in the eventual arguments I make in the thesis.

According to Sapsford (1999:241-2), three questions need to be answered in any discussion of research methods: (1) what is the source of your data? (sample, settings, or whatever); (2) What information will you collect (what was the questionnaire or data collection schedule, and how (and why) was it chosen or constructed)? And (3) What procedures will you follow? In other words, how was the questionnaire or schedule administered, how was the researcher's presence introduced, and so on?

In this chapter, I attempt to address these questions with respect to all three projects above in chronological order. I shall begin, however, with a presentation of the research questions followed by a discussion of the methodological approaches (i.e., data collection and analysis) adopted in this study and the rationale for their use. A brief outline of the key ethical issues that underlie the research is also included in this section.

Research Questions

The study focused on the major themes in the lives of the young people and the challenges confronting them in terms of adjustment to a new society, family and school life, identity, goals, aspirations, and achievement (*compare* Zhou & Bankston 1998; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Of particular relevance were the following three questions: how is the group of young people in the research faring educationally and occupationally? What are the challenges confronting them in their everyday lives? And to what extent do refugee parents, who hold high aspirations for their children, translate those aspirations into outcomes favourable to the children's success at school and in society? (*compare* Waters 1999).

Choice of Research Approach to Data Collection, Analysis, & Ethics

The purpose of this section is to justify the methodological approach adopted, and to briefly outline the steps taken to safeguard the ethical issues involved in the research. Four topics are addressed including (a) rationale for qualitative research design; (b) why interviews? (c) data analysis, and (d) ethical issues in research.

But first a definition of the term 'small-scale research', used above, is in order. Martyn Denscombe (2007) considers 'small-scale research' as that which is part of an academic course (p. 1), and conducted by individuals operating within the constraints of a tight budget (p. 93). Peter Knight (2002:xi) calls it a systematic enquiry that involves one person, little or no funding and a fairly short period of time to complete the enquiry and the report. Small-scale research can be of value to the enquirer and to the research participants, and may also provide a valuable contribution to the wider worlds of practice, policy and theory (ibid., p. xii).

Apart from the timeline which in my case dates back to the last decade, I believe both descriptions are apt as far as this project is concerned. I fully concur with Knight's sentiments here, and have endeavoured to make my research relevant to the participants, and to the wider worlds of policy, practice, and theory.

Rationale for qualitative research design

My choice of qualitative research design is based upon five guiding principles. The first of these is that qualitative research design offers the prospect of authentic accounts of complex phenomena (Denscombe 2007:85). In this study, I am interested in the hard realities of early adult life for the children of Somali refugee parents I interviewed in 1997. These

realities are indeed complex, and anything but straightforward. A qualitative approach will allow me to deal with that complexity. It should scratch beneath the surface of events to allow me to delve into the adaptational experiences of these young people, and to provide in-depth descriptions that are detailed enough to reflect the complexity of their social world.

The second principle, linked with the first, is that qualitative designs offer a humanistic style of research focused on the lived experiences of people in their everyday world. The central premise here is that peoples' actions cannot be understood unless the meaning they assign to them is understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds are involved, the researcher needs to be close to the objects of study to gain deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction (see Marshall & Rossman 2006:53). In this context, the strength of qualitative research is that it stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference (*ibid.*, p. 54).

The third principle is that, in addition to gaining access to people's world views, the approach permits a degree of flexibility in both the selection of instances for inclusion in the sample and the analysis of the data – both of which are well suited to the explanation of new topics and new ideas (Denscombe 2007:104). In this context, the researcher can change direction in the course of his or her investigation much more easily than in quantitative research, which tends to have a built in momentum once the data collection is underway (Bryman 2008:389).

In this research, having interviewed Somali parents over 10 years ago with one interview guide, I conducted follow-up interviews with them by the use of a more robust and up-to-date interview protocol. I also conducted fresh interviews with their (now adult) children about whom I interviewed the parents in the first phase of the study. Such substantial flexibility in research design can only come from qualitative research as opposed to quantitative approaches whose 'requirement to make interviews as

comparable as possible for survey investigations limits the extent to which this can happen' (ibid., p. 389).

Because of the adaptability of qualitative approaches, I have also interviewed three extra young persons and a new parent who were all relevant to the research topic. In that sense, the design of the research had further emerged and developed during the last rounds of data collection.

The fourth principle is that qualitative approaches include the means for developing theoretical propositions from data (Denscombe 2007:104). I am fully aware that most qualitative researchers, and practitioners of grounded theory in particular (e.g., Glaser & Strauss 1967), stress the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge out of one's data (Bryman 2004:373). However, it is also the case that qualitative research can and should have an important role in relation to the testing of theories as well (see, for example, Silverman 1993; Anfara & Mertz 2006). On this basis, it is my intention to test the segmented assimilation hypothesis in my research 'to see if [its] theoretical propositions can be supported by the evidence' (Gray 2004:320) (for a full exposition of my theoretical framework, see chap 2).

Finally, I chose qualitative research design because it is suited to small-scale research where, as in my case, the budget is low and the main resource is the researcher himself (see Denscombe 2007:85). This study relies on in-depth interviews with a small group of people and does not call for technologically sophisticated or large-scale survey for the purposes of data collection and analysis.

The perspective I espouse throughout this thesis is in keeping with the rationale cogently argued by Denzin & Lincoln (2003) and other qualitative researchers whose arguments can be summed up as follows: Qualitative researchers deploy flexible and open-ended approaches to learn the meanings and views held by participants in a study (Creswell & Maietta 2002:145), and always seek better ways to make more understandable

the worlds of experience they have studied (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:31). I endeavour to apply these standards in my enquiry.

I chose interviews as a method to study the social worlds of my subjects in qualitative terms. And that is the topic I turn to next.

Why interviews?

The rationale for using the interview as a data-collection strategy in research is perhaps best provided by Steiner Kvale (2007:1) when he remarks:

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them? Conversation is a basic mode of interaction. Human beings talk with each other, ... interact, pose questions and answer questions. Through conversations, we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes and the world they live in. In an interview conversation, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situations, their family and social life. The research interview is an interview where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee.”

In the view of Martyn Denscombe (2007:174), if the researcher wants to collect information on simple and uncontroversial facts, then questionnaires might prove to be more cost-effective method. However, when the researcher needs to gain insights into things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, then interviews will almost certainly provide a more suitable method – a method that is attuned to the intricacy of the subject matter (*ibid.*, p. 174).

The decision to use interviews for a research project needs to take account of their feasibility as a data collection method, according to Denscombe (2007:175), on the basis of two criteria (a) that it is possible to gain direct

access to the prospective interviewees; and that (b) the interviewees are viable in terms of the cost in time and travel involved.

Of course, there will be no point in pursuing the idea of conducting interviews unless there are good grounds for believing that the necessary people can be accessed, and that some agreement can be obtained from all the parties involved in the research. The second criterion is quite obvious in that the researcher needs to ensure that the people are not distributed too widely across a large geographical area and that conducting the interviews will not incur prohibitive costs (*ibid.*, p. 175).

The design of this study was based on taking a small sample of young adults, ranging in age from 19 to 28 and their parents in London. In essence, therefore, the study was geographically doable. But also negotiating, gaining and maintaining access was not a problem because of my old connections with these families through the previous project. I, in fact, considered my role as being that of a 'cultural insider' (e.g., Letiecq & Bailey 2004).

Cultural insiders, it has been said, can forge new relationships based on trust and equitable partnerships with their subjects (de Anda 1997). They will give primacy to their subjects' definitions of what is meaningful, what is considered successful, and what should be measured (*ibid.*). Thus whilst an outsider may miss some of the subtle nuances emanating from cultural differences, a cultural insider may not do so. In this research, the parents often spoke Somali and because I am a native Somali speaker, there were absolutely no language issues between us. As I expected, all the young people were bilingual – speaking English and Somali. Because I did the same, there were again no opportunities for miscommunication or misunderstanding.

That is why the interview was the most logical research technique for use in this project. Through these interviews, I was able to seek out the world views

of my participants and their interpretations of the world in which they lived (see Fontana & Frey 2003). The object of this study was to explore the hard realities of early adult life for the children of Somali refugees taking part in the project. A study focusing on individuals' lived experience must necessarily rely on in-depth interviews whose primary strategy is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants' own words (Marshall & Rossman 2006:55).

I chose semi-structured interviews to explore in depth and in detail the opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences of these young adults and their parents. Whilst I had an interview guide (a list of questions on specific topics to be covered) in my interview sessions, I was still flexible in terms of the order in which the topics were considered. More importantly, I let interviewees develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues covered in our conversations. The answers were open-ended, and emphasis was placed upon how the interviewee framed and understood issues and events (see Bryman 2008:438).

Most of my participants were available for face-to-face interviewing. However, there were several occasions when I conducted telephone interviews because participants were not available either for work or other reasons, or for the convenience of the hour. A few participants were living abroad at the time of interviews so I had to call them. I would agree with the suggestion, set forth elsewhere in the literature, that it is much cheaper to conduct interviews by telephone. There are also other benefits to this particular method in comparison to face-to-face interviewing, according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007:379-80). They suggest asking sensitive questions by telephone is more effective since interviewees may be less distressed when the interviewer is not physically present. Although most of what I asked could not be considered sensitive, I confirm that nearly all my participants were able to express themselves readily and effortlessly over the phone.

Thus my telephone interviewing generated detailed and considered replies from my participants. So when the saving of time and travel costs is taken into account plus the large volume of data that was collected via the phone, it can be regarded as a highly efficient method (see Bryman 2008:457). All my interviews were tape-recorded with permission, and transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis, including interview data, involves five stages: (1) preparation of the data; (2) familiarity with the data; (3) interpreting the data – through concept mapping and theme development (see Faherty 2010, chap 5); (4) verifying the data; and (5) representing the data (Denscombe 2007:288). Varieties of these stages and alternatives are proposed by, among others, Rubin & Rubin (2005, chapters 10-12), Marshall and Rossman (2006, chap 5), Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2006, chap 16), Seidman (2006, chap 8), Gibbs (2007, chap 7), Kvale (2007, chap 9), and Bryman (2008, chap 22).

In this study, I follow Denscombe's 5 stages above to analyze my data. Stage one - preparation of the data - involved transcribing the interview tapes; collating and organizing data in a compatible format; making back-up copies of all original materials to be stored safely, separate from working copies; indexing of the raw data so that all interview material could be identified exactly in terms of where it should be located (*ibid.*, p. 289-90). Other tasks that were performed at this stage included the following: keeping track of participant information forms, making sure the written consent forms were copied and filed in a safe place, labeling audiotapes of interviews accurately, managing the extensive files that developed in the course of working with the transcripts, and keeping track of decision points in the entire process (see Seidman 2006:112).

In stage two, I became thoroughly familiar with the data by reading and re-reading all the interviews so that I knew everything in the data intimately. By immersion in the data, people, events, and quotations sift constantly through the researcher's mind (Marshall & Rossman 2006:158). I must say here that I followed Gibbs's (2007:143) advice to novice analysts to heart: "Read and re-read the text ... so that you become thoroughly familiar with it and each time you do so, ask new questions of it" (ibid., p. 144). Indeed I did do that until I arrived at the theme development stage of my analysis.

Stage three involved the development of codes, categories and concepts from the data. For me, coding represented marking the text by highlighting, circling, underlining or commenting upon just to indicate matters of interest so that I can return to them later in the analysis (see Faherty 2010, chap 5).

As for concept mapping and theme development (see Gray 2004; Lewis 2007), I have arrived at my themes in two ways. First I have used the theoretical formulation which guides the research and the published works of the key people in the field to find concepts and themes. According to Rubin & Rubin (2005:209), using published literature to suggest concepts and themes by which to code is perfectly legitimate. In addition, I have also looked for concepts and themes in the questions I have asked. By following these two approaches, I have gathered eight key themes from the data which I have thoroughly analyzed and discussed in the thesis.

Denscombe's stage four calls for the verification of qualitative research (e.g., Miles & Huberman 1994; Seale et al., 1999; Silverman 2006). The researcher must have some way of demonstrating that their findings are 'true', otherwise there are no good grounds for anyone to believe them (Denscombe's 2007:296-302). The credibility of research needs to be demonstrated as part and parcel of the research process itself (ibid.).

I believe the credibility of my research can be demonstrated in three ways. First, as Deborah Padgett (2008:185) advises, one way to help alleviate

doubts in qualitative research is to incorporate a section into the proposal explaining the rationale for using qualitative methods. As per the previous sections above, I have defended my choice of methods in this research.

Second, and following Steiner Kvale (1996:237), I have completed a variety of stages in the research process to prove the trustworthiness of my study, namely: I have a theoretical framework that is rigorous and has a logical link to the research questions; I have voluminous and accurate data; my translation of the data from an oral to a written medium demonstrates fidelity to the key features of the interview situation; my data analysis demonstrates fidelity to the data; and my reporting, in my view, is fair and will be seen to be fair by readers (see also Kvale & Brinkmann 2008, chap 15).

Third, I use Padgett's (2008, chap 8) strategies for enhancing rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research to answer Denscombe's doubts above. According to Padgett, threats to trustworthiness in qualitative research fall under three broad headings: reactivity, researcher biases, and respondent biases. Reactivity refers to the potentially distorting effects of the researcher's presence on participants' beliefs and behaviours. Researcher biases emerge when observations and interpretations are clouded by preconceptions and personal opinions of the researcher. Respondent biases could emerge in the sense that respondents may withhold information and even lie to protect their privacy or to avoid revealing unpleasant truths (pp. 184-185).

Of course, not all of Padgett's strategies for rigour are relevant or feasible for my study. Thus I only highlight here those that address one or more of the threats to trustworthiness described above and are relevant to this research, namely prolonged engagement and evidentiary adequacy (p. 192).

Arising from the early days of anthropological fieldwork, according to Padgett (2008:186), prolonged engagement has come to be a defining

characteristic of qualitative studies as it helps to ameliorate reactivity and response bias. The idea is that when she spends long periods of time in the field, the researcher becomes accepted. A trusting relationship between researcher and respondents develops, and this then makes withholding information or lying by respondents less likely. Prolonged engagement may not be possible for interview-based studies, she says. To remedy this situation, in Padgett's view, conducting more than one interview is a step toward accomplishing this goal.

In this research, data was gathered over an extended period of time. I interviewed the parents twice, more than a decade apart. In my latest fieldwork, I also interviewed their now grown-up children to examine the adaptive challenges they faced at school, in the neighbourhood, and in society (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Zhou & Bankston 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2002).

Prolonged engagement, for me, represents the fact that I stayed in touch with these parents for over a decade and was able to collect a second round of information from them after all those long years, and to cap it all from their children. The fact is that I didn't see the many years that elapsed, before this long-delayed follow-up was carried out, as a loss. I viewed this time lag as a process that should enable us to discern changes where they exist in both the parents' and young people's lives. The positive thing about it all is that the data provides a one-off long term follow-up of the lives of a particular group of people (see Farrall 2006:3) - if you like, "a movie rather than a snapshot" (Berthoud 2000:15). It captures through long-term immersion the depth and breadth of the parents' life experiences and changes they underwent from being newly-arrived to becoming established (see Saldaña 2003:16). The data also offers fresh perspectives into how the children of refugees and asylum seekers 'subjectively negotiate the changes that occur in their lives at times of personal life transitions' (Holland et al., 2004:6).

Like Morrow and Smith (1995), I address evidentiary adequacy by reporting on the breadth of the data: two sets of data collected more than a decade apart; more than 55 hours of tape-recorded interviews; and many more hours of follow-up interactions with both parents and young people. Data for analysis exceeded 505 pages of transcriptions, containing 185,488 words (84,001 words from parental transcripts, and 101,487 words from young people's transcripts); bundles of field notes and documents. Padgett (2008) advised 'conducting more than one interview to accomplish prolonged engagement' (p. 186). In this research, the total number of people who gave me interviews or information added up to 40 individuals, 14 parents and 26 young men and women.

Stage five of Denscombe's (2007) analysis is concerned with reporting the research or presentation of findings. I have used two basic ways to share the interview data. First, I have developed profiles of individual parents and their children to provide a glimpse of the life and experiences of these families in London in the late 1990s to the present. A profile in the words of participants is said to be the research product that is most consistent with the process of interviewing (Seidman 2006:119). It allows for the presentation of participants in context, clarification of their intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis (Dey 1993:30-39, cited by Seidman 2006:119).

I call these profiles stories because they represent real accounts of events pulled together from the participants' own words. I attempt no a priori organization of the narratives other than by the order in which the interviews took place. According to Seidman (2006:119), researchers interview people in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories. I hope the 10 stories in chapter 4, and the 25 portraits of young adults in the appendix serve to illuminate the challenges confronting the parents, their children and young adults, and the distinct ways in which they have attempted to adapt to their new environment. The stories will also be used in later chapters to help frame

and interpret the overall results of the research.

The second method I have used to share the data was to present the themes that emerged from the detailed scrutiny of interview transcripts. These themes were considered in detail in terms that relate to the theoretical question which motivates the research, namely segmented assimilation theory (e.g., Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes 1995; Portes & Rumbaut 1996, 2001, 2005, 2006; Rumbaut & Portes 2001). Altogether eight themes emerged from the data. As far as possible, direct quotations from interview transcripts were presented to communicate the subjects' viewpoints. Some literary comments are also presented with the analysis throughout Part III (chaps 5 to 7). I also provide a fuller reflection on the significance of the findings for my research questions and for the literature in Part IV of the thesis, *Discussion and Conclusion* (chap 8). I shall now briefly turn to the key ethical principles that underlie this research endeavour.

Some ethical principles & procedures

Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in qualitative research (see Flick 2007:68-76; Flick 2006:44-53; Kvale 2007:23-32; Gibbs 2007:90-104; Christians 2003:208-43).

Bryman (2008:118) identifies four areas in which ethical concerns particularly arise: whether harm comes to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; and whether deception is involved. Uwe Flick (2007:69) adds four other principles of ethically sound research: (1) Accuracy of the data and their interpretation should be the leading principle, which means that no omission or fraud with the collection or analysis of data should occur in the research practice; (2) In relation to the participants, respect for the person is seen as essential; (3) Beneficence, which means considering the well-being

of the participants; (4) Justice, which addresses the relation of benefits and burdens for research participants.

As I prepared this design, I have read the *Code of Practice* in the Research Governance and Ethics Policy of the Institute of Education, University of London (see *Code of Practice for Research Degrees 2007-2008*). In this document, ethical issues are said to be particularly pertinent in relation to the following: gaining access; confidentiality; dual relationships in the work context: professional and researcher; dissemination; giving feedback and reporting (critical) findings; conflict of values; accountability; and protection of participants (see also http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=7196&7196_0=7972).

All research projects at IOE, including student projects, are subject to ethics review before the project starts. Reviews for research students are conducted by student's supervisor and a member of the student's advisory committee. In this context, students are required to complete the postgraduate research ethical review form entitled *Ethics Approval for Doctoral Student Research Projects: Data Sheet*. I completed this form and submitted, along with my methodology chapter, for consideration and approval. In return, the required ethical approval has been received.

I have also consulted several statements of professional principles and ethical guidelines freely available online at the above doctoral school link. These included Bera's research guidelines (2004), BPS's code of ethics and conduct (2006), BSA's statement of ethical practice (2002), ESRC's research ethics framework (2005 - not listed by IOE), and Baal's recommendations on good practice (2006) (full references and links to these documents can also be found in my bibliography). Of these, I have chosen to follow Bera's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) because it offered a set of principles to guide and assist me in conducting the research to a high ethical standard. Bera's ethical guidelines are available at <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/ETHICA1.PDF>.

As indicated above, there are three projects involved in this research. The first interview project was carried out in 1997. Ethical approval was obtained for that project under the old ethical review system of the Institute of Education, University of London. Hence the ethical considerations outlined in this section and the frameworks adopted apply only to the two new interview projects undertaken in 2008/9.

Knowing full well that the responsibility for the conduct of my research in line with relevant principles in IOE's code of practice rested with me in person, I endeavoured to ensure integrity, quality and independence in the design and conduct of the entirety of the research (see ESRC 2005:1). Independence here denotes that any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit (*ibid.*, p. 1). I also abide, throughout the conduct of this research, by two basic principles that underlie all scholarly writing, namely: to ensure the accuracy of scientific and scholarly knowledge; and to protect intellectual property rights (APA 2001, pp. 387-96).

Fieldwork Project No. 1: Interviews with Refugee Parents a Decade ago

A word of caution is in order here. This section represents my recollection of what happened as I gathered my initial interview data over a decade ago, in the months of June and July 1997. Whilst the data was rendered into a textual form by transcription very soon after the fieldwork, it was never systematically analyzed. This is because I pulled out of the course for personal circumstances in 1998 without completing the research (I elaborate this point further in my acknowledgements).

After an elapse of so many years, it is possible that some of the information I now (winter term 2008) recollect 'might be faulty, selective or inaccurate' (Cohen et al., 2007:211). What is more, the further back one's memory

reaches, the greater is the danger of distortion or inability to recall (*ibid.*, p. 215). I have two points here in my defence. Firstly, no data arising from my old fieldwork is lost or missing from my files. I have got all the tapes and written transcripts from those tapes together with all the non-taped interview notes taken. And secondly, I attempt to recall what those events meant to me at the time of my interview data collection in 1997 rather than look at them through the lens of hindsight and subsequent events.

I define fieldwork here, in a minimalist sense, as the gathering of qualitative data through the interviewing of subjects in the field. What follows is my recollection of what happened in 1997 as I collected my first interview data.

A little over ten years ago, in June and July 1997, I set out to interview ten Somali refugee parents of school-age children in London to obtain some information about their experiences and perceptions of life in the UK, and their expectations for their children (see Appendix A for a copy of my interview schedule). The majority of these parents arrived in Britain at the beginning of the 1990s following the outbreak of civil war in Somalia. At the time of the project, six interviewees were living in North London; three families lived in South London, and one family lived in West London.

A purposive sample of Somali refugee parents with school-age children living in London was selected for this study. The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed (Bryman 2008:415; Johnson & Christensen 2008:239). Criteria for the sample were threefold: being Somali refugee parent with school-age children living in London; having arrived from Somalia as an asylum seeker since the beginning of the civil war in 1988; and being available and willing to participate in the research project. Like Becker (1963) and Waters (1999), I used snowball sampling which is a sub-type of purposive sampling (see Bryman 2004:544) to make initial contact with a small group

of people, and then use them to establish contact with others who were equally relevant to the research topic.

All interviewing took place in respondents' homes. I assured all participants that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Interviews were undertaken only with the express permission of the respondent, and all respondents were given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time.

I sought to interview equal numbers of men and women, but ended up with six mothers and four fathers. The choice was the families' (where there were two parents) to decide who they wanted me to interview. I agreed to interview whoever was presented to me, and that is partly where the figures of mothers versus fathers above come from. Once a contact was established, I approached these individuals to ask for permission to interview them for one to two hours and to tape-record the interviews. While most of the parents had no problem being interviewed on tape, at least three parents had big reservations about their conversations being taped and had opted for written interview notes to be taken by me. I obliged and took notes to allay their fears. Nonetheless, I believe I still secured a complete account of the series of exchanges that took place in those non-taped interview sessions. I also conducted repeat interviews where necessary which allowed me to cross-check information.

Although I had what amounted to a structured interview schedule with a clearly specified set of research questions, the interviews tended to be more open and qualitative in nature. The respondents sometimes began the interviews by talking about significant life events, which meant the interview schedule had to be adapted during the interview process. I was also generally flexible in my approach to questioning the interviewees. I varied the order of questions, followed up leads, and cleared up inconsistencies in answers. As the sessions progressed, some of the interviewees raised

additional or complementary issues that I found fascinating and these now form part of the transcript.

The purpose of interviewing immigrant parents was less to study their own histories than to understand how their experiences and attitudes frame the immediate environment of their children (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2001). With every parent I spoke to, I collected information about a named child's life trajectory, migration history, school experience, and social adaptation in the UK with a view to understanding the in-school and out-of-school experience of the particular child, and parents' expectations of his or her future. The named child was the oldest in the family, in most cases. Altogether there were ten children I enquired about, 5 boys and 5 girls. Issues of language, bilingualism and culture, experiences of family in the UK, and children's school, social and vocational experiences all contained in the eight page interview protocol. Each interview lasted from about one to three hours.

Respondents' answers varied depending on whether the informant was a highly educated, articulate person, or whether it was a parent with very low education. Responses from the former touched on the macro-level issues in terms of the adaptive challenges faced by the Somali community at large, as well as the opportunities available to young people in the new country. Answers from the latter tended to concentrate on their own difficulties and the challenges faced by their children at school and in the neighbourhood (compare Waldinger 2001).

I had amassed a great deal of data from these interviews about parental reflections on why they had decided to leave their country, their pre-migration and flight experiences, their lived experience in the UK, their perceptions of inner city schools and neighbourhoods, and how they viewed their children's current lives in terms of emotional and academic adjustment, and their future prospects. A fuller examination and

analysis of this data can be found in parts III & IV of the thesis, *analysis, discussion and interpretation*.

In terms of procedures, I had a pre-structured interview schedule which contained all three types of questions: closed (or fixed-alternative), open and scale items. The schedule was divided into the following five parts/sections and preliminaries (i.e., date of interview, who was interviewed): (1) Child's family background; (2) Language, bilingualism and culture; (3) Experiences of family in the UK; (4) Family and school; and (5) Child's social competence, vocational and religious experience (a copy of this schedule is presented in Appendix C). The last is important in the sense that religion primarily shapes immigrants' cultural identity (Zhou, Bankston, & Kim 2002) which in turn is a source of values and goals (Hein 2006).

I have generated interview topics from the literature. My interest at the time was (and still remains) to examine how children of Somali refugees cope with the losses and stresses of immigration or the refugee experience, and a wide array of difficulties and hostilities in poor inner-city schools, while at the same time desperately trying, seemingly against all odds, to succeed at school and in society (compare Caplan, Choy & Whitmore 1991).

Looking at the questions and responses from parents ten years on, I am not so sure that the main issues covered in the interview schedule address the objectives of the research as stated above, or that the schedule elicited the most appropriate kinds of data to answer the research questions. My view is that the interview schedule asked for some appropriate kinds of information. However, I am uncertain as to whether it would be exhaustive in its coverage of the elements of inclusion to produce the kinds of data required to provide us with relevant evidence about the main features, dimensions, and key elements of the research question.

It is also apparent to me now that, maybe out of fear of getting into trouble with the authorities as most immigrants do, some of my respondents may have been reluctant to answer questions about themselves. I am uncertain, looking back, as to whether it was the parents or the youths themselves who were best placed to answer questions pertaining to the adaptive challenges faced by the children. In this connection, an important limitation of this fieldwork is that information on the children was obtained indirectly from parents and thus was often quite limited.

I should also acknowledge here that my level of information at the time on the subject matter of my research was also limited. Steinar Kvale's (1996: 148-9) dictum that one needs to "know the subject matter in order to conduct an informed conversation," and Holstein & Gubrium's (1995: 77) emphasis on the importance of 'acquiring background knowledge relevant to the research topic' are both apt here. The literature on the adaptation process of the second generation, which is where my research resides in terms of 'scholarly conversation' (Bettis & Mills 2006), have only recently sprang up.¹⁶ This turn of events does very little for my old field work, but helped me gather the information necessary to decide upon and specify the primary objective of the interview guide for my second fieldwork, as well as to identify and itemize the subsidiary topics that relate to its central purpose.

The last two items I ought to cover in this section are language and transcription. I am talking about language here as the medium through which the business of research was conducted when asking questions and obtaining responses from my interviewees. It was Becker and Geer (1957) who argued a longtime ago that the qualitative researcher is in the same position as a social anthropologist visiting a distant land. In order to understand the culture, both need to learn the language. Yet this is not simply the formal language that must be understood in order to engage a complex urban society. It is also very often the 'argot' – the special uses of words and slang that are important to penetrate the culture (Bryman

2004:338). In my case, I did not need to learn the language, or the 'argot' for that matter. I speak Somali as my first language, and that was also the first language of all my interviewees. I developed my interview schedule first in English, and then translated it into Somali. I have conducted all ten interviews in Somali, and can confirm that opportunities for miscommunications and misunderstandings were minimal in my conversations with these parents.

I fully transcribed all interview tapes in a way 'that was faithful to the original language and flow of the discussion' (Poland 2002, pp. 631-32). However, like Chan (2003), I chose not to transcribe "every hum and haw" of what was said in interviews. According to Chan (2003, p. xxiv), oral history purists who transcribe every nonstandard usage of language are not ensuring authenticity but are rather fetishizing "exotic" speech. She found such a stance paternalistic and condescending (see also Flick 2006, pp. 288-92). I agree with her and decided against producing transcripts that are 'verbatim facsimiles' (Poland 2002:629) of interview conversations. Instead, like Chan herself and also Bacon (1996), I edited the transcripts of our dialogues, eliminating most of the hesitations and repetitions of spoken language. Nonetheless, the text I produced was loyal to my interview participants' oral statements, and it also had a reasonable relation to the question asked and the focus of the research (see Kvale 2007:93).

Because the interviews were conducted in Somali, I had systematically translated the audio-taped information into English. The translation was not an exact word for word, but nonetheless captured the whole of the audio-taped verbal conversations without substantial alteration of the content. If we accept Kvale's (2007:93) definition of a transcript as a translation from one narrative mode – oral discourse – into another narrative mode – written discourse, my translation of the tapes into English 'introduces yet another layer of interpretation in the interview-tape-transcript interface' (Poland 2002:633). That interpretation, to the

best of my skill and understanding, represents a faithful reproduction of the oral record.

I have not produced a written record in Somali from the tapes, but only English language transcripts. How this worked in practice was like this. I would start listening to a tape using a transcriber, and then type up on the computer an English translated version of every Somali language sentence uttered by the speakers, myself and the respondents. I would translate the question, and/or any prompts, reminders or cues I give, and then the whole answer given by the respondent. I continue with that process until I fully transcribe the whole tape, and then have the transcript or written record in English. The outcome, in my view and echoing Steinar Kvale (1995), was a valid translation from oral (Somali) to written (English) language. A descriptive analysis of this data is presented in Chapter four.

I now turn to the follow-up of my original interviewees some 11 years later with a view to exploring how their situation and outlooks had changed over time, and to gauge their perceptions of the children's progress and setbacks to date.

Fieldwork Project No. 2: Follow-up Interviews with Refugee Parents a Decade and a Year on

In this section I still follow Sapsford's (1999:241-2) three questions above. But before I answer these questions, I need to justify my design here. Why do I need to conduct follow-up interviews with these parents some 11 years later if my focus is on their young people? I answer this question in three parts. Firstly, I want to further explore the experiences and views of the parents about raising their children in British inner cities, and to capture changes occurring in their circumstances, perceptions, attitudes and expectations more than a decade later.

Secondly, all research exists in historical time and many qualitative researchers have re-interviewed informants or returned to original research sites or data sets (see Thompson, Plumridge & Holland 2003:185). It is *through time* that we can begin to grasp the nature of social change, the mechanisms and strategies used by individuals to generate and manage change in their personal lives, and the ways in which structural change impacts on the lives of individuals (Neale and Flowerdew 2003:190). Indeed, it is only through time that we can gain a better appreciation of how the personal and the social, agency and structure, the micro and macro are interconnected and how they come to be transformed (ibid., p. 190).¹⁷ This part of the research (*Fieldwork project no. 2*) embodies the notion of time.

Thirdly, having carefully examined and analyzed the transcripts from my first project, I conducted follow up interviews with my original subjects to ensure that missing or implied information is tracked down, that contradictions are addressed if not resolved, and that I get more depth and understanding about concepts and themes in the original data that are particularly pertinent to my research concerns (see Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp. 173-200).

Because of the more than 11 year time lag between the first field work and the second round of interviews, the main concern that I had was the real possibility of 'sample attrition' (Bryman 2004:48) or 'sample mortality', in the words of Cohen et al. (2007:216). Sample attrition takes place when participants are lost to the study during the follow-up measures. The longer the time between measures, the greater are the chances of losing research participants (Robson 2002:161). In this research, fortunately, there was no sample attrition.

I undertook this fieldwork and the next one (see next section) simultaneously, between Nov. 2008 to March 2009. The source of my data for this follow-up was my original interviewees discussed in the last section.

Since my first project in 1997, I remained in touch with many of them. Using my own channels just prior to the second fieldwork in 2008, I made some preliminary enquiries about the whereabouts of those parents that I did not keep in touch over the years. I then found out that at least three of them were living abroad at the time.

One of the single mothers (Parent Interviewee no. 3), Amino (not her real name)¹⁸ who was living in South London at the time, moved to North Africa a few years ago with the youngest two of her three children. She has not completely cut off her ties with the UK because her eldest son Said who I interviewed her about and her husband were still living in their London house. The husband has reunited with his family from Somalia in 1999. Amino told me over the phone that they left the UK in 2005 because the children were not achieving at school in this country. She was willing to give me a follow-up interview over the phone. She also had no problem in my talking to her son Said who was left behind with his father in London.

The father of Ubah, Hussein (Parent Interviewee no. 10), who lived with his family in West London at the time of interview, was now a politician working for the Transitional Federal Government (hereafter known as the TFG) in Somalia. I spoke to him over the phone some months prior to the second fieldwork in 2008 whilst he was in Somalia. He told me that he divided his time between Somalia and the UK, and was willing to talk to me in person if he came to the UK or on the phone if he was abroad.

Ubah (his daughter), who the interview was about as a school child, had graduated from university in the UK, he told me. She subsequently got married to a fellow Somali and moved to a country in the Middle East where both of them work in the banking sector. They also have three children together. Hussein said that I could interview, in the place of Ubah, one of his other daughters who is a trainee solicitor in London. He also suggested that it might be better for me to talk to his wife, Jimo, who looks after the children in the UK, and is more knowledgeable about their circumstances

past and present. I said it was a very good idea and that I would take up the offer of interviewing his wife rather than himself. Thus I contacted Hussein's wife (Jimo) who duly agreed to take part in interviews, and was subsequently interviewed. I also interviewed five of his children, including the trainee solicitor daughter.

A third parent (Interviewee no. 9), Abdi, was also out of the UK, staying in East Africa at the time. I got his contact numbers from his wife in London, and called him. He told me that he returned to Somalia about 7 months ago to work as an official representative for the TFG in a region outside Mogadishu (see Abdi's story in chap 4).

I sent Abdi my participant information leaflet which outlines the details of the study and what participation will involve, and asked him to take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if he wished. We also agreed on a time and date for me to call him to take the interview. I subsequently called him to conduct the interview, and the conversation was tape-recorded.

I did exactly the same with all the other participants whose interviews were conducted over the phone. These were five in total. All the rest, 9 parents were interviewed face and face and also some of them through both the telephone and face to face. I found the contact numbers of those parents who I didn't keep in touch with from my own contacts in the Somali community. It was not really difficult to get their contact details once you have some basic details about them, as the Somali community are closely knit. Once I got in touch with them, they all agreed to provide me with these follow-up interviews.

The original interviewees were essentially a 'homogenous sample selection' in qualitative research terms (e.g., LeCompte & Preissle 1993; Patton 2002). They provided us with an in-depth understanding of how a group of Somali refugee parents in London think about their children's lives in

inner-city neighbourhoods. Despite problems, setbacks, and much suffering emanating from their 'refugee experience' (Ager 1999), in their initial accounts, most parents were optimistic about their children's schooling in the UK - an outlook they endeavoured to translate into high expectations and a sustained effort to achieve them.

The purpose of re-interviewing the parents was to explore how their situation and outlooks had changed from 11 years ago, and to gauge their perceptions of the children's progress and setbacks to date. In these follow-up interviews, many parents were quite pessimistic about the present and future position of their children. They suggested that their children were growing up in bad areas - places where they were exposed to violence, drugs, dysfunctional lifestyles, negative role models, unfriendly neighbours and poor quality schools (see Elliott et al., 2006:33). Because of these influences, they thought their children might have little opportunity to acquire the personal skills and experiences necessary for effective participation in mainstream society (*ibid.*).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with these participants to ask them to reconstruct their experiences and to explore their meaning. I used an interview guide to conduct these conversations with them. The guide covered the family background of war, flight and exile; changes in family situation; parents' views about raising children in the UK; education and work experiences for the young as seen by the parents; family social support and religion; transnational contacts; and parents' hopes for the future of their children (a copy of this guide is presented in Appendix D). I also ensured that the information I collected from the parents updated the existing data.

The guide allowed me to establish some measure of control and uniformity over the interviews so that I explored the key issues and questions that were relevant to my research concerns. It also provided the space and flexibility necessary for respondents to tell me about the key issues that they identify

as important to their lives. In other words, the guide was there to facilitate our conversation, 'pointing out to the general direction but not specifying which nooks and crannies we explored' (see Rubin & Rubin 2005:150).

The challenges faced by researchers include such issues as gaining access to the population of interest, and establishing trust and rapport with participants (Berk & Adams 1970; Barton 1998). Research settings can be relatively open or relatively closed (Bell 1969, cited by Bryman 2004:294). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) make a similar distinction when they refer to "public" settings as opposed to ones that are not public. The latter include organizations such as firms, schools, cults, social movements, and so on. The open/public settings is likely to be everything else – that is, research involving communities, gangs, drug users, and so on (Bryman 2004:294).

I would categorize my research setting as an open setting, and my role as a native researcher or, in the words of Letiecq & Bailey (2004), a 'cultural insider'. Cultural insiders, it has been said, can forge new relationships based on trust and equitable partnerships with their subjects (de Anda 1997). Whether they can do this or not is debatable. But certainly they can bring an insider's view and experience to the project, and might also be able to situate the study within the worldview and ecology of their own culture (see, for instance, Lomawaima 2000).

Some (e.g., Naples 1996) have problematized the notion that a so-called native researcher who shared some attributes of a cultural background would, by virtue of that background, have full access to participants' knowledge in that culture. They also questioned the hidden assumption that insider knowledge is unified and stable, and the view that insider/outsider positions are fixed and unchanging (Naples 2003:40, cited by Olesen 2005:249). Kath Weston (1996:275) sums up this position: "A single body cannot bridge that mythical divide between insider and outsider, researcher and researched. I am neither, in any simple way, and yet I am both" (cited by Olesen 2005:249).

As an individual member of the Somali community in London and with first-hand knowledge and contacts with many people, I entered the lives of my participants with a view to learning from them but maintaining, in the words of Michael Patton (2002:49), “a stance of empathic neutrality”. I used friends, relations, contacts, and colleagues to help me gain access to whoever was relevant to my research question. But I didn’t pick up respondents from my own kin and friendship networks as that could create a potential for bias in the sample (compare Hein 2006).

Language barriers can also be problematic for researchers (Padilla & Lindholm 1995:104). Hence the need for a language that is comprehensible and relevant to the people being interviewed (Bryman 2004:324). In my case, I used Somali, the primary language of the community (e.g., Perot & Youdelman 2001), as the tool to elicit data from the parents because of their limited or no English. All research literature such as letters of introduction and human subject consent forms were prepared in English. However, before the start of interview sessions with parents, I have sight-translated these written materials into Somali to make sure that parents were thoroughly familiar with the aims and objectives of the study.

Most interviews were conducted in parents’ family homes. I have also located and interviewed by phone parents who were out of the UK at the time of interviews. In all cases, I provided a clear explanation of my aims and methods, and was prepared to deal with concerns. I also negotiated, and was reasonably honest about the amount of people’s time I was likely to take up (see Bryman 2004:297).

Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed along the lines detailed in the *Data Analysis* section above. No participant refused to be put on tape, and hence I had no need to take interview notes. At the start of each interview, information forms were completed containing the personal

details of interviewees, but also essential information about the proceeding of the interviews (see Flick 2006:285).

A voluminous amount of information was gathered from both interviews with the parents. This is the primary source for the data reported in *Chapter 4: Somali Parents' Stories*. Other than that, due to word limit and the fact that the thesis has to focus on the experience of the children, no thematic analysis of parental data had been organized into a separate chapter or chapters. Yet, it is also true to say that many insights drawn from this data inform the thesis.

The details of who was interviewed in both parent interview projects and who gave me information, when, and how (i.e., face-to-face, or telephone) is presented in Table 3.1 below.

3.1 Parents Interviewed in 1997 & then in 2008/9				
Name, no. of parent interviewed in 1997	Date & Type of Interview	Name & No. of parent in the follow-up Interviews of 2008/9	Date & Type of Interview	Follow-up telephone conversations post-interview
Mulki Mother (Parent No. 1)	June 1997 FtF	Mulki – Mother (Parent No. 1)	27th Dec. 2008 FtF	Yes
Muhiibo Mother (Parent No. 2)	June 1997 FtF	Muhiibo* – Mother (Parent No. 2) Mohyaddin* (father)	1st Feb. 2009 FtF	Yes
Amino Mother (Parent No. 3)	June 1997 FtF	Amino – Mother (Parent No. 3) Mattan** (father)	30th Dec. 2008 Tel.	Yes
Halimo-Sa'diyo Mother	June 1997	Halimo-Sa'diyo – Mother (Parent No. 4)	30th Nov. 2008	Yes

(Parent No. 4)	FtF		FtF	
Muumin – Father (Parent No. 5)	June 1997 FtF	Muumin – Father (Parent No. 5)	15th Jan. 2009-03-20 FtF	Yes
Awralo – Mother (Parent No. 6)	July 1997 FtF	Awralo – Mother (Parent No. 6)	5th Jan. 2009-03-20 FtF	Yes
Daruuro – Mother (Parent No. 7)	July 1997 FtF	Daruuro – Mother (Parent No. 7)	14th Jan. 2009 Tel.	Yes
Hussein – Father (Parent No. 8)	July 1997 FtF	Hussein – Father (Parent No. 8)	26th Dec. 2008 FtF	Yes
Abdi – Father (Parent No. 9)	July 1997 FtF	Abdi – Father (Parent No. 9) Naima** (Mother)	21st Nov. 2008 Tel.	Yes
Mohamed (Father) (Parent No. 10)	July 1997 FtF	Jimo – Mother (Parent No. 10)	6th Mar. 2009 Tel.	Yes
		Bilaajo – Mother (Extra Parent)	11th May 2009 Tel.	No
N= 10	June –July 1997	N= 14 parents	30.11.08 to 11.05.09	Followed up = 13 parents Not followed up= 1 parent

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- FtF – Face to Face Interview
- Tel. – Telephone Interview
- Extra Parent is the parent of one Extra Young Person (EXYP) Interviewed. I enlisted three extra young people to the project because the girls outnumbered and out-qualified among the children of my original parent interviewees. I have only

interviewed one extra parent.

- All names of parents mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.
- * This was the only couple, husband and wife, interviewed jointly.
- ** I did not formally interview these two parents. I merely took further information concerning their children/family from them, both by phone and face to face.

Fieldwork Project No. 3: Interviews with young Somali people in London in 2008/2009

Project no. 3 follows a similar pattern to the one presented above, and I follow the same three questions by Sapsford (1999, see above). In this project, I have conducted in-depth interviews with 26 young Somali people – 14 females and 12 males, between Nov. 2008 and March 2009. I also had follow-up telephone conversations or face to face contacts with almost all of them up until I completed writing up their stories in the latter part of 2009 and the beginning of 2010. The follow-up was often as important as the initial interviews in gaining a full picture of their situation. All, except 3 of these young people, were the children of my parent interviewees in 1997.

I enlisted 3 extra young people to the project because the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the group of children from the original parent interviewee families. The extras were a female and two males. The latter come from polar opposites in terms of their adaptation trajectories. One is a hospital registrar and the other is an unemployed young man who ran away from school by age 13.

All the young people in the study, except one – Guure, were born in Somalia and arrived as children between the ages of four and twelve. Guure was born in Germany and came to the UK with his family at the age of three. At the time of interviews, their ages ranged from 19 to 28. Their median age was 23.

The purpose of interviewing Somali young people was to understand their adaptation patterns and life trajectories into adulthood. I therefore determined to interview as many of the children of my original parent interviewees as possible because they alone would have “the experience and first-hand knowledge about the research problem” (Rubin & Rubin 2005:64). These young people will have lived in the UK for the most part of their lives, and will have had first-hand experience of life in inner city schools, institutions, and neighbourhoods. It follows from this that they were likely to produce the most valuable data that can give us a good picture of the educational and occupational trajectories of young Somali people growing up in inner-city areas.

Johnson & Christensen (2008:598) call this purposive sampling. The researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals with those characteristics (ibid.). The advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to home in on people or events which there are good grounds for believing will be critical for the research (Denscombe 2007:17).

Refugees come in waves (see Haines 1996), so the other group of young people that I could have selected were recent arrivals. The obvious problem here would be that they would have little relevant and first-hand experience of the research problem due to the fact that they have only recently arrived. Besides, recent arrivals, according to Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2002:9), are in some ways unique and must be analytically isolated from issues facing the *subsequent host country generations or longtime residents* (my italics).

In defining recent refugees as opposed to longtime residents and natives, I follow the example of Ricardo Stanton-Salazar’s (2001) study of U.S.-Mexican youth in California which designated “recent immigrants” as those who had resided in the United States for 7 years or less (≥ 7 yrs), and “acculturated” students as those who were either U.S.-born or

immigrants with more than 7 years in the United States (*ibid.*, p. 274-5).¹⁹ The young adults I studied fit in with this definition of longtime residents.

I contacted these young men and women one by one, and interviewed them about how the contexts in which they have grown up in London have affected their experiences in life, how they feel about their progress, and where they think they fit within British society (compare Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2002).

I prepared an interview guide to explore their experiences and major challenges to educational achievement and career success. The guide covered relevant topics, including home, family, ethnicity and social networks; educational and employment experiences; transnationalism; and young people's hopes for the future. I must emphasize here that the focus of this project was to gain a full picture of the educational and occupational trajectories of the young people. Thus all the other questions in the instrument were subsidiary to these two main issues (a copy of this guide is presented in Appendix E).

The discussion guide for interviews with young people, as it was called, made use of all the major American study designs mentioned above. Moreover, it drew on several British studies about the experiences of young people, both native and immigrant (e.g., Jones 2002; Johnson & Burden 2003; Forsyth & Furlong 2000; Forsyth & Furlong 2003; Furlong & Cartmel 2004; Furlong & Cartmel 2005; Ennelli, Modood, & Bradley 2005; Cassidy, O'Connor, & Dorrer 2006; Green & White 2007). Full references of these works are available in my bibliography at the end of the thesis.

Like Waters (1990) and Hein (2006), I used survey questions as the outline for my semi-structured interviews. In my case, the outline of the interview guide contained items from the survey questions employed by some of the above studies. I borrow from their instruments freely to pick and choose any

question(s) which I think is relevant to my research. As such, I am unable to say what share (percentage-wise!) of my interview guide came from a particular research project or other. What I can say is that most of the items on the guide or schedule came, equally or unequally, from the survey questions of the above major U. S. research projects, and the literature of the British studies mainly published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Bryman (2004:324) catalogues some of the basic elements in the preparation of an interview guide as follows: (1) create a certain amount of order on the topic areas, so that your questions about them flow reasonably well, but be prepared to alter the order of questions during the actual interview; (2) formulate interview questions of topics in a way that will help you answer your research questions (but try not to make them too specific); (3) try to use a language that is comprehensible and relevant to the people you are interviewing; (4) do not ask leading questions; (5) remember to ensure that you ask 'face-sheet' information of a general kind (name, age, gender, etc.) and a specific kind (position in company, number of years employed, number of years involved in a group, etc.) because such information is useful for contextualizing people's answers (see also Robson 2002, p. 278-82). I followed this flexible design when I constructed my interview guide to explore the experiences and views of my research participants.

In procedural terms, I adopted the step-by-step coverage of the key elements of research interviews, including gaining access, and establishing trust and rapport, covered in fieldwork project no. 2 above. The one thing I will add here is that whereas I have used Somali as the tool to elicit data from the parents because of their limited English, I used English when it came to interviewing their children.

The majority of these young adults were competent bilinguals – speaking both Somali and English. But they were also 'biculturally competent' (see Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2002:7), as they had sufficient mastery of

both English and Somali. That said, English was the language that these young people had more conversational knowledge for it to become 'the linguistic medium of the interview craft' (Kvale 2007:143). Thus I have prepared my interview guide for them in English. All other written forms of communication, such as letters of introduction and human subject consent forms were also prepared in English for this group.

In interview sessions, I explored the topics in the guide to help uncover the participants' views but otherwise respected how they framed and structured their responses (see Marshall & Rossman 2006:101). In this context, I gave my participants the freedom to express their subjective feelings as fully and as spontaneously as they chose or were able to do. It's their perspectives on the topics in the guide that should unfold, and not my views on them. I encouraged them to talk about the subject at hand, gently prompting and probing as and when necessary (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2007:356).

I adopted wholeheartedly Kvale's (1996:30) key characteristics of qualitative research interviews, namely: engage, understand, and interpret the key feature of the lifeworlds of the participants; use natural language to gather and understand qualitative knowledge; be able to reveal and explore the nuanced descriptions of the lifeworlds of the participants; elicit descriptions of specific situations and actions, rather than generalities; adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena, rather than being too pre-structured; focus on specific ideas and themes, i.e. have direction, but avoid being too tightly structured; accept the ambiguity and contradictions of situations where they occur in participants, if this is a fair reflection of the ambiguous and contradictory situation in which they find themselves; accept the interview may provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves; regard interviews as an interpersonal encounter, with all that this entails; and be a positive and enriching experience for all participants.

I had a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered in my interview guide. However, as I said above, I was prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics were considered. I let the interviewees develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised. I gave them the time and space necessary for them to answer and elaborate points of interest.

As in fieldwork no. 2 above, interviews were conducted in wherever possible: in participants' own homes or outside (e.g., in a public place) depending on their circumstances, preference or agenda. I conducted both face-to-face and telephone interviewing with participants. All interviews were tape-recorded, including those taken over the phone. The latter, in particular, provided a high acoustic quality interviews. No interviewee declined to be tape-recorded and, therefore, I had no need to make field notes of the interviews themselves.

Considering the number of interviews (26), transcribing the tapes was very time consuming indeed. I was assisted by one of my research participants, a young female, who kindly agreed to transcribe some of the recordings. Following Mishler (1986, 1991), I initially gave her three interviews on CDs to let her do a rough transcription of them. I then selected to retranscribe two of the three she transcribed, and found that the job was well done. She transcribed the tapes as accurately as possible. To avoid bias, she did not transcribe the interviews of anyone she knew or lived in her area. The CDs she received had pseudonyms in order to hide the individual's real identity. Altogether, this young woman transcribed or, in some cases, co-transcribed with me about 8 interviews.

I have done the remainder (18) myself. We both transcribed the entire interview tapes. I also set out, as advised by Kvale (1996), written instructions concerning the transcribing which I shared with her in order to improve the consistency of the process. In all, out of each audio recording, we created a detailed and careful transcript that recreates the

verbal and non-verbal material of the interview, and reflecting the oral conversation as fully as possible (see Seidman 2006:115-116).

The details of who was interviewed for this project and who gave me information, when, and how (i.e., face-to-face, or telephone) is presented in Table 3.2 below.

3.2. Details of Young People Interviewed Who, When, & How?				
Parent/ Family no.	Number, name, age & gender of Young person interviewed	Type of Interview	Date of interview	Follow-up telephone conversations post-interview
Parent/ Family No. 1	1.1 Samiya (f, 21) _____	FtF _____	27.12.08 _____	Yes, with the mother _____
	1.2 Su'ad (f, 21)	FtF	27.12.08	Yes, with the mother
Parent/ Family No. 2	2.1 Fahmo (f, 21)	Tel.	03.02.09	Several FtF conversations with Fahmo
Parent/ Family No. 3	3.1 Said (m, 21) _____	Tel. _____	03.02.09 _____	Yes, with his father _____
	3.2 Iftin (f, 19)	Tel.	30.12.08	Several FtF & Tel. conversations with Iftin
Parent/ Family No. 4	4.1 Nafiso (f, 26) _____	FtF _____	03.12.08 _____	Yes, FtF & Tel. _____

	4.2 Dahabo (f, 24)	FtF	21.12.08	Yes, FtF & Tel.
	4.3 Mahad (m, 22)	FtF	27.11.08	Yes, FtF & Tel.
	4.4 Rahman (m, 20)	FtF	03.12.08	Yes, FtF & Tel.
Parent/ Family No. 5	5.1 Farhan (m, 26)	FtF	08.01.09	No
	5.2 Nawal (f, 20)	FtF	17.01.09	No
Parent/ Family No. 6	6.1 Weris (f, 23)	FtF	01.01.09	Yes, with her mum
Parent/ Family No. 7	7.1 Alas (m, 25)	FtF	04.01.09	No
Parent/ Family No. 8	8.1 Zaki (m, 23)	FtF	07.01.09	FtF & Tel. With the Father
	8.2 Kassim (m, 21)	Tel.	17.02.09	Same as above
	8.3 Fardosa (f, 20)	FtF	21.01.09	Same as above
Parent/ Family No. 9	9.1 Suuban (f, 28)	FtF	19.12.08	FtF & Tel. con with parents
	9.2 Jamal (m, 27)	FtF	08.01.09	Same as above
Parent/ Family No.	10.1 Deeqa (f, 27)	FtF	31.01.09	Tel. cons with

10	_____	_____	_____	mother
	10.2 Habboon (f, 26)	Tel.	24.02.09	Same as above
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	10.3 Adil (m, 25)	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	10.4 Zahra (f, 24)	FtF	31.01.09	Tel. cons with Adil himself
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	10.5 Guure (m, 20)	FtF	31.01.09	Tel. cons with mother
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	Tel.	07.11.09	Same as above
Extra Young Person no. 1	Maandeeq (f, 20)	Tel.	11.05.09	No
Extra Young Person no. 2	Dr. Guuleed (m, 27)	FtF	28.02.09	No
Extra Young Person no. 3	Jidhaan (m, 25)	FtF	10.03.09	FtF & Tel. cons with Jidhaan himself
Children of my original parent interv= 23 EXYPs=3	26 Young People	FtF= 19 Tel.= 07	Interviews conducted between 27.11.08 to 07.11.09	Followed up= 21 young people Not followed up= 5 people
List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the tables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FtF – Face to Face Interview • Tel. – Telephone Interview 				

- Cons - conversations
- EXYP or Extra Young Person. There were three extra young people interviewed for the project: 2 males, and a female. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because among the group of children from my original parent interviewees, the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the rationale for qualitative research design, including interviews as a method of data collection. Ethical procedures were also addressed and reasonably justified.

Besides, three distinct but complementary fieldwork projects whose data this research is based were fully explored. The first fieldwork project was about ten Somali parent interviews I collected in 1997. The second project deals with follow-up interviews with these same parent interviewees more than a decade later. The third project is concerned with in-depth interviews I conducted with 26 grown up children of these original interviewee parents 11 years later.

All three projects were discussed along the lines of Sapsford's (1999:241-2) three methodology questions, mentioned above (see p. 92). I discussed research design issues, including sampling approach; how access was achieved; the procedures used; the nature of the interview guide, and why I asked what I asked; issues of access and cooperation; and how I proceeded with my analysis (Ogden & Godberg 2002).

According to Deutsch & Goldman (2006:833), there are three key standards for research: (1) the mode of research should be appropriate to the problem, (2) it should be conducted as well as humanly possible given the available resources and circumstances, (3) it should be knowledgeable and explicit about its limitations. The foregoing discussion has highlighted my attempts to answer these methodological questions.

Lastly, it has been said that qualitative researchers focus on ‘description and explanation’ (e.g., Burgess 1984; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Patton 2002). I hope the design decisions in the preceding pages fully reflect this position. The presentation of the findings and analysis in the chapters to come, it is to be hoped, will do likewise.

Part II: The Stories

CHAPTER IV

SOMALI PARENTS' STORIES

ABOUT LIVING IN THE UK

Two sets of stories over a decade apart

In this chapter I present two sets of stories collected from Somali parents in London more than a decade apart. The first set of stories arises from interviews I conducted with ten parents (6 mothers and 4 fathers) about 12 years ago. The next set is based on follow-up interviews with the same parents and, in two cases, with their spouses between November 2008 and March 2009. These stories serve to illuminate the challenges confronting Somali parents and their children, and the distinct ways in which they have attempted to adapt to their new environment. The stories will also be used in later chapters to help frame and interpret the overall results of the research. I attempt no a priori organization of the narratives other than by the order in which the original interviews took place (see Tables 4.1 & 4.2, the characteristics of parents interviewed in 1997 and then in 2008/2009, at the end of this chapter).

1

Mulki Hassan Ali, and her daughter Su'ad living in South London, June 1997

Mulki, a single mother of 3, arrived in the UK in 1994 as a refugee from the wars in Somalia. I interviewed her at her family home in the beginning of June 1997. She had twin daughters aged 9, and a 7 year old boy. She had no husband at the time of the interview because "the father was absent". All

three children attended a local primary school. The named child I interviewed her about was one of her twins, Su'ad, who she described as "a capable girl *that* behaves well towards her parents".

Mulki had college education, and worked as school teacher in Somalia. The absent father of her children had no education at all and worked as a driver. All members of her family including the children, their father and herself were born in Mogadishu, Somalia. Her family was "very much" affected by the civil war. Some of her closest relatives were attacked, maimed, or killed. Because of the war, Mulki herself, her brothers, her sisters, and her mum all ended up in exile "each living in a different country ... and none lives together as a unit". Only her elderly father is left behind, who now lives on his own in Mogadishu.

Mulki and her own children saw some of the fighting at the beginning but "were not in Mogadishu during the larger-scale battles". She decided to flee with her children "as soon as the wars started in an effort to keep the children out of harm's way". But the ongoing wars back home still hurt the feelings of the children. Su'ad's reaction during collections for refugees in Bosnia at school shows her feelings when she said: "I am not able to give because for me my own people are hungry, such as my grandfather, my maternal/paternal uncles need help so why should I give to Bosnia".

Mulki speaks a little English and is adapting well to life in the UK. As she puts it: "I say to myself: you have nothing but to adapt to this country". But she also complains of racial harassment and physical attacks on herself and her children by young men in the neighbourhood. These attacks "continued for one and a half years". Mulki says she reached a point whereby "I wouldn't take my children to the [local] park" for fear of being attacked by this gang of youths. She says she'd rather go to other parks outside the area where she lives in the hope that nobody would recognize her, and the children can play there without being recognized and attacked. She further

complains that “the police and the Housing authorities haven’t helped at all”.

Mulki thinks it is very important that her children receive good education. She is satisfied with Su’ad’s education and the school that she goes to because the children “are receiving a lot of support from the teachers with additional English language classes”. In her view, “when the child learns the language, he can easily be taught the other subjects”. Mulki also helps her children at home. “I very much help them at home,” she says without being too specific. She would like her daughter, Su’ad, “to complete a university level education”. She also wants Su’ad “to become a bank manager after completing university”.

Mulki would like to see organized Somali community groups offering support to parents to help their children learn outside school: “We need some people who could help us to help the children in English language... in the Somali language ... and maths and science”. She thinks the children need to learn how to write Somali. She speaks to them in Somali at home, but the children speak English together despite mum saying “speak in your own language”. In her opinion, “... it is not right that the child is brought up only knowing a foreign language. He must know that he is Somali, and is from Somalia. And he needs to learn his own language, both in writing and speaking, and pass it over to their children.” Mulki says she takes the children “to the mosque on Fridays, *Eids* (Islamic holidays), and whenever I have the opportunity to do so”. They also go to the *Madrassa* for religious learning twice a week.

Asked about how she sees the future of her children in the UK, Mulki does not sound terribly positive: “I don’t see anything in my children’s future in this country. I see that it is not that big. I am only hoping that they receive some education. Apart from that, however, I am not expecting that much future for my children in this country.”

Fast Forward to 27th December 2008

I visited Mulki and her family at the end of December 2008, some 11½ years after my first interview with her. The family still lives in the same house in South London where I saw them back then. The twins, Su'ad and Samiya, now aged just under 21, live in the house with their mum and their younger brother, Artan, who is 17. Su'ad and Samiya both go to university whereas Artan is doing his sixth form at a local further education college. Su'ad is studying for a degree in dietetics, and Samiya is training to become an Osteopath.

Asked about changes to her family since 1997, Mulki says her elderly mum and her niece (now aged 25) came from Somalia to live with her in the UK on the basis of family reunion. The grandmother arrived in October 1997, and sadly passed away at the beginning of December 1999. The niece joined them in 2003, has now a job, and continues to live with the family. Mulki herself went to college to do IT (Information Technology) and English language courses. She's got 'level 2' qualifications with respect to both English and IT. Mulki has recently secured a job as School Escort and works with local schools to help with the transportation of children with special needs from the time they leave their parents or carers until they're placed in the care of the school, and similarly on the return journey. All members of the family, including the niece, are now naturalized British citizens.

Mulki recounts her children's educational experiences and gives her views as to what brought about their academic successes: "Teachers were helpful ... I had good rapport with the school staff, including teachers and even the headteacher. I would have their telephone numbers and would call them if I need to do that. If there was any problem at school involving my children, they would contact me so that I get involved in seeking a resolution to it".

In terms of support with homework and after-school tuition, Mulki had this to say: "I was always friendly with my children. I would take them to school, and when they come home we all work together on the homework and lessons. ... My children had problems with maths. So I bought maths educational tapes to help them with learning maths at home. There was a retired headteacher who lived in the 6th floor who helped my children learn their maths lessons with these tapes. That is as much as they had for private tuition."

This was a female-headed household throughout the children's time in the UK because Mulki and her husband divorced soon after their arrival in 1995. She talks of an incident whereby her ex-husband (the father of her 3 children) could not recognize his own son because he had no relation with his children at all since the parents split up. The son was working in the shop of his maternal uncle when the father showed up. There the father could not recognize his own son. The boy was then asked if he knew who the man was, to which the son replied that the man was his dad. Mulki makes much of this to point out that she has single-handedly raised her 3 children and that there was no father in the household to help her with that huge undertaking.

Nonetheless, Mulki exudes great confidence and self-satisfaction about the progress her children made so far and about their future in the UK. She believes that they have worked very hard to get where they are now. Her children "were top students in their classes, and they never had problems at school". Now that the twins have gone to university, she says, her son is going to follow suit.

Asked about what insights she could pass on to parents who are in a similar position as she was some years ago, Mulki had this to say: "It is important for the parents to know about what is happening with their child, and that they talk to him when the child comes back home. Talk to your child as much as you can and share things that are of interest to him but also get

the information from him/her.” She warns against parents easily giving up on their children: “I put the onus on the parents. Parents will give up easily on their children. If your child is doing something wrong, you should intervene and ask them to stop. Talk to them and reason with them. ... Remind them about their past and ask them to look at their position now! You might be able to turn them around. Children are not animals, they are human beings”.

2

Muhiibo Mohamed Aden and her daughter Fahmo living in South London, June 1997

Muhiibo and her family arrived in the UK on the first day of January 1995. She came as a single mother with 6 children because her “husband is away”. Muhiibo and her children were all born in Mogadishu, Somalia. When I interviewed her in June 1997, the ages of the children ranged from 6 to 17 years, and they were all engaged in full-time education. The child I interviewed her about was a 10 year old girl named Fahmo who was a primary school pupil at the time. In addition, she had 3 other girls and 2 boys.

According to Muhiibo, her children had fitted in well with the school system contrary to her expectations. She says she “never thought that they would integrate well into school” because of all the negative war-time experiences that they’ve had. These included “many deaths of close family relations.” The children were also exposed to serious fighting, including the use of heavy weaponry and indiscriminate shelling.

Muhiibo had completed secondary education in Somalia, and worked for the Somali government for 12 years. She later worked as a solo-trader for 8 years. Muhiibo has no job now, saying “I am a single mother”. She speaks a

little English, and can also write simple things such as names and addresses. She can also read at a very basic level, she says. Muhibo questions the whole notion of adapting to life in London because she says she is of a certain age now whereby “no matter how long I adapt to this country, it will be not like that my Somali outlook and tradition are sidelined by this culture”. She thinks it is more likely that if her children “further remain in this country that they may lose their culture and tradition,” but not her because she is an old person. She believes it is very important that her children remain fluent in Somali, and “shall make every effort for them to learn and maintain their native tongue”.

Although the family arrived at the beginning of 1995, Muhibo says “it is only this year that my daughter [Fahmo] has been going to school for a full academic year”. Fahmo could not find a school place for almost two years: “In 1996, she only went to school for a few days or less than a month”. The other children found school places straight away. Muhibo is quite satisfied with the school that Fahmo goes to because “the school has helped her with many things,” such as providing additional English language support to bring her to the level of other pupils. As a result, “She now speaks the language (English). She has learnt it very well. She also learned the writing”. Muhibo is very happy with the overall performance of her daughter at school.

It is very important for Muhibo that her children receive good education. She would like her daughter Fahmo “to complete the highest level of education, and obtain a degree in economics”. Asked about what she would like her daughter to do when she grows up, she responded with an emphatic “I’d like my daughter to do economics at university”. The only problem she sees for the future of her children in the UK is that they may not be able to maintain their religion: “I have no criticism about the future of my children in here in terms of their life, education, and their future well-being ... I believe the thing that would concern me would be religion, but not other problems”.

But she also talked about the rough side of the area where she lived. Troubles started, she says, soon after they moved into their present address at *Innova House* (not the real name of the estate). Their new neighbours did not take kindly to their presence, and gave them a cold welcome. Racist taunts, threats, and physical violence became the order of the day, and gangs of young people congregated outside her house to cause trouble: “they were kids from the neighbours... there was a boy who acted as the gang-leader. He will bring with him up to 6, 7, 8 kids. Throughout June, we were attacked. It was like an attack month for us. (we were) stoned non-stop”. These attacks continued unabated until the police and local authority got involved and helped the family.

There was a serious incident that could have resulted in significant injury or even loss of life when teenage arsonists set fire to a disused garage beneath Muhibo’s house at about midnight in January 1997 forcing the family and people in neighbouring homes to flee. Muhibo and some of her children were still awake when they noticed smoke filling up their house. Fire crews were called to tackle the blaze. Luckily no one was injured and all the people in the estate at the time were rescued safely from the building. Because the fire has left the building unsafe, it was considered too much of a risk to leave people in their homes in case the structure collapsed. Muhibo’s family had to stay with relatives for almost four months until extensive renovations were carried out in the building.

Fast Forward to 1st February 2009

Muhibo still lives in the same address where I saw her back in 1997. This time, her husband Mohyadin was also there and took part in the interview. Mohyadin is a retired diplomat and has been living in the UK ever since he arrived in 1998. He worked as a diplomat in a European country for many years before the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. Mohyadin stayed put in that same country for many more years in the vain hope of continuing to serve his country in his old (or any other) capacity once the state has been

resuscitated. But the latter has become ever more elusive, and hence Mohyadin decided to seek asylum in the UK to join his family who were already living as refugees in London.

Despite racist attacks on herself and her family when they arrived in the country, including a serious arson attack on her house, Muhibo stayed put in the old house. She says she had refused to be cowed by the local thugs. These were unruly white boys who caused us a lot of trouble, she says. In the end, and as a result of a series of court actions, the white youth gangs and their families were evicted from the estate. Muhibo took part in many of these court actions as a prosecution witness. The estate has now become a place where several different races and ethnic groups live together, and Muhibo says they feel completely at ease in it.

According to Muhibo, many things have changed in her family since 1997. She came into the UK with 3 young children (2 boys and a girl) and 3 teenage girls. Out of the 3 younger ones, a boy (17) still lives with the parents and goes to college. The older boy (Qatar, 20) is held in a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) for 'drug related offences'. He was imprisoned in July 2007 and is due to be released in the middle of 2009. The girl (Fahmo, 21) has stayed at home but not excelled at school. She went to a number of colleges over the past few years, but hasn't succeeded in anything. For the past 2 years, she's been confined to the house. She doesn't go to college or university. She doesn't work as she is unable to leave the house. She felt too depressed to even move. She spends long periods in front of the TV and, as a result, feels passive, tired and less able to do anything else. According to Muhibo, seeing her daughter "in such a state of abject misery, lacking all interest in life" is causing her so much anxiety and distress. At the time of this interview, Fahmo was in another European country, where she was staying with relatives for a few weeks, and is said to be "slowly getting better."

Muhibo is utterly dissatisfied with the turn of events, especially for her younger children. As she puts it: "It is very different between how things are today and the euphoria that we've had upon arrival in this country. The kids, however much effort you make to put them on the straight and the narrow, will just turn nasty. In my case, I've tried very hard to put them on the right path. I don't think there was any other parent who tried as hard as myself, but then what have I got show for it. It is the environment, i.e., the school, the neighbourhood, friends, TV, etc., that is bigger than you and your family which will decide what happens to your child".

Muhibo draws an analogy between the state of her family and a big wall coming down on them: "We came into a society where we have to start everything from scratch. We literally have to knock down a big wall/barrier to get across. Some people were knocked back by the wall, others went through it and made it to the other side. In our case (our family), the wall literally came down on us. That is in terms of what has become of our children". According to her husband, Mohyadin, "We'll be lucky to have 50 percent of our (Somali) young people not going down, i.e., getting into trouble with the law and winding up in prison, ending up in the streets or, even worse, finishing up dead. In this country, kids are told that they're free. That causes us a problem."

Taking up this theme of 'children being free', Mohyadin accuses the social services of "really messing it up" for them when they took his daughter Fahmo away from the family: "...imagine a girl complaining about her parents and the police and social services collecting her straight away from home, putting her up in a hotel, and also paying her £50 a week for expenses, and telling her that she is free to do as she pleases. If that is their way of dealing with young people, then you'll have no children coming back to you." What the social services have done in the case of Fahmo, according to Mohyadin, has led to his daughter deteriorating and, in the end, losing it.

On a positive note, Muhibo mentions that her three older daughters have all got married, have their own children and are living with their husbands in London. Her eldest daughter has one child, a daughter; her second eldest daughter has five children; and her third eldest daughter has two children. All the girls are living in intact families (i.e., living with their husbands and children) in South London, not very far away from where Muhibo's family lives, and are regularly in touch with their parents.

3

Amino Tifow Sabriye, and her son Said living in South London, June 1997

Amino and her children arrived in the UK as refugees from Somalia in 1993. I interviewed her in June 1997 at her home. She had 3 children, 2 boys and a girl, but her husband was "not around". The children's ages ranged from 5 to 10, and they all attended their local primary school. Said, the elder of her two sons, was the one I interviewed her about. He was adapting well at school, played with other children, and has learned English very well, she said. Amino "doesn't speak a lot of English." She cannot read or write English and hasn't yet adjusted well to life in the UK, she said.

Amina had completed "intermediate level education", and worked as a school teacher before she left Somalia. The absent father of her children had also "been to school in Somalia" and later worked as a driver. She is presently a full-time mother, and "has no job outside the house". All members of her family including the children, their father and Amino herself were born in Somalia. The family were affected by the war, and many of Amina's "relations have either died or been injured in the fighting".

Amino thinks her children need to learn their native language, Somali. She wants them to be able to read and write their native tongue in addition to

English. Other things that are important for her, from a cultural viewpoint, include “the Islamic religion, that we are Muslims. That we do not eat some of the things, such as pork, alcohol, etc”. She takes her children to the *Madrassa* (*Koranic* lessons) several times a week, and she thinks this will help them on the “religious side” of their lives.

Amino talks of problems she had in the area where she lived. There were white “kids roaming around the estate” who continually harassed and taunted them: “Fucking. Monkey Africa, what you coming my country”. Sometimes these young people “come to knock our door, and pour water (?) in the doorstep,” says Amino. Some of these boys want to pick a fight with her son, Said. Because of these threats, Said often stays at home rather than go out and risk being attacked by these youngsters.

Amino eventually reported these incidents to the local housing authorities who took action against the families of these young people. She compares her situation with what would have happened had she been in Somalia: “If it was Somalia, we would be running outside, and nobody would have targeted at us”. She feels sorry, in particular, for the position of her children who, she says, “would have been left alone ... But in this country, you keep an eye on the child as if he/she was a sheep. It is difficult!”

Whilst Amino is satisfied with the school that Said goes to “because there is no problem,” she acknowledges that she can’t help him at home with his education: “I would like to have somebody to help me with Said’s education, somebody who is more educated than me”. Yet she is unsure who that person could be or where they will come from.

Nonetheless, it is very important for Amino that Said “learns now and go to work later when he finishes school”. In her own words: “What does somebody who has not learned stand for? ... they are like animal. The person that learns is good. Education is very important”. Amino is, on the whole, optimistic about the future of her children in the UK, and believes

that with effort she can help them “learn adequately, have good education, and a good future”.

Fast Forward to 30th December 2008

The single most important event that took place for Amino and her children since my interview with her more than a decade ago was the arrival of her husband, Mr. Socdaal, in 1998. When I conducted this follow-up interview with her, Amino and the younger two of her three children were living in a country in North Africa. She told me that they left the UK in 2005 for educational purposes because her children were not achieving at school in the UK. Her elder son, Said (m, 21), and her husband were left behind and are still living in the family house in South London. The husband works as a chauffeur and provides for his family in North Africa where the children have been attending private English schools for the past several years. He also pays their school bills as well as the upkeep of the family home in London.

Amina's daughter, Iftin (19) who was a very bright child even in England but couldn't get the higher grades she wanted in her UK GCSEs, retook most of her GCSEs abroad and gained 3 A*s and 2 As. This success was due to Iftin being very well tutored by local teachers and the school environment in the new country they went to, according to Amino. Buoyed by the success in her GCSE tests, Iftin went on to do her A levels and gained further 3 As in biology, chemistry, and computing. All the exams Iftin took in North Africa were what is known as the Cambridge IGCSEs (International General Certificate of Education), a qualification accepted for admission to university in the UK. Indeed whilst still abroad, Iftin applied for a university place through UCAS at the beginning of 2009 and secured an unconditional offer for a BSc course in Biomedical Sciences to start in September 2009 at a top London university. Upon completion of this course in 3 years time, she intends to study for an MB BS (Medical Degree) through the Graduate Entrant's Programme (GEP) (see Iftin's story, Appendix A). Colow, Amina's

16 year old son, has also studied for his IGCSEs in the same country. He will be taking his exams in the summer of 2009, and is expected to perform well on them.

The story of her eldest child, Said (m), is the most difficult one for Amino and her husband. Said achieved little in school or thereafter. At the age of 21, Said is not in education, employment or training (see Said's story, Appendix B). Said was returned to Somalia by his parents as soon as he finished school in 2004, and remained there for the next two years.

In Amino's telling words: "Said fell with a wrong crowd, and wouldn't stop roaming the streets. We thought that we would lose him if we didn't bring some changes to his life, and that was why we decided to send him to Somalia. He got wiser because of the time he spent there, but the problem was that he went back to his old group when he returned to the UK. If I could keep him apart from this group I would, but I can't. Maybe if we moved to another area, he might lose contact with them. But we can't afford to move to another area."

In fact what has become of Said propelled Amino and her husband not to allow their two younger children, and especially the boy (Colow), to end up in the same situation as their older brother, and hence the decision to take them to North Africa.

Amino, her children and her husband are all naturalized British citizens. She plans to return to the UK later this summer so that she can look after her daughter when she starts university. She will also repatriate Colow back to the UK having achieved, she hopes, good grades in his IGCSEs so that he can commence further education courses upon arrival back in London. She also wants to be a helping hand for her elder son, Said, who found it hard to pick up the pieces and carry on with his life.

Halimo-Sa'diyo Hashi Elmi and her daughter Nafiso living in North London, June 1997

Halimo-Sa'diyo and her 4 children arrived in London in 1993. She is a single mother whose husband disappeared "during the wars" in Somalia. She had two girls and two boys aged between 9 and 15 when I met her for the interview in June 1997. All the children were in full-time education. I talked to her about Nafiso, her eldest daughter, who was 15 at the time. Nafiso went to the local comprehensive and, according to the mother, "wanted to go on studying up to a university degree".

Halimo-Sa'diyo has no formal education, and never went to school in Somalia. She was a housewife looking after the children, and her husband supported the family. The husband had a job as an 'accounts manager' in the public sector, but sadly he died during the outbreak of the civil war. The family was also affected by the privations of war forcing Halimo-Sa'diyo, like many others, to flee with her children from Somalia. They ended up in the UK.

She describes "lack of English as the most difficult experience" she's faced since arriving in the UK. None of her children could also read or write at the beginning so they had problems dealing with their correspondence. Some relatives helped them as they arrived, but also the local authorities assisted them with their problems. For now (in June 1997), she says, "We are far better than what we were upon arrival. We can read, we can write. Even myself, I know some little English. I can also write and read little things". She says they are all adapting to life in this country and would dearly love to do so. The family has not faced any racial harassments or attacks: "Nobody attacked us, and we have not had any problems".

It is very important for Halimo-Sa'diyo that all her children get educated. She would also like to see the children "learn both the reading and writing of the Somali language so that they will not lose their culture". For this reason, Halimo-Sa'diyo takes the children to the *Madrassa* "several times a week," and to the mosque "once a week on Saturdays". There they learn the Koran and also meet other Somali families and children. Religion is very important for Halimo-Sa'diyo and her family. As she puts it: "I want us (children and herself) not to lose our religion".

Nafiso is doing "O.K." at school and has had no problems so far. She also helps to keep the house clean, and shares other domestic chores. Halimo-Sa'diyo would like to see Nafiso secure a job requiring university level education. She is also positive overall about her children's future in the UK: "It is my view that the children will make a decent living in this country, *Inshaa Allah* (God Willing)".

Fast Forward to 30th November 2008

I interviewed Halimo-Sa'diyo at her home, along with all her 4 children. Also her sister who lives nearby took part in the conversation, although the latter wasn't tape-recorded. The family lives in the same area but at a different address to the one that I visited them back in 1997. They now live in a permanent council property. All of Halimo-Sa'diyo's four children lived at home when I conducted these last interviews with them. But earlier this year (2009), Nafiso (the eldest daughter) had secured her own accommodation and hence moved out of the family home. Nafiso is married and has a 4 year old daughter, but her husband still lives in America. I am told that husband is returning to the UK shortly to live with his family, and that is why Nafiso has moved out to rent her own place. The rest of Halimo-Sa'diyo's children are unmarried.

Halimo-Sa'diyo reminisces about how good the children were when they were growing up. Now things have changed: "As they have grown up, a lot

has changed about them. Things are different, and kids have changed. As they grow up in this country, children become more difficult. You cannot control them, and they will not listen to you.”

In off-tape remarks, Halimo-Sa'diyo takes a swipe at her younger son Rahman who she accuses of spending far too much time with groups of young men hanging out in the streets. She thinks that Rahman and his friends are up to no good, but she can't figure them out. Her sister reminds Halimo-Sa'diyo that Rahman started having loads of friends who'd turn up at the house within a few months of the family arriving from Somalia, and that it was always a struggle with him. Halimo-Sa'diyo claims that Rahman is the person that she worries about most out of all her children. At 20 years of age, Rahman has no job. He goes to the local college doing, according to him, an access course to higher education business studies. But this is contradicted by his mum and also by his auntie who both claim that he spends far too much time with groups of unruly young men in the streets (see Rahman's story, Appendix B).

Rahman's older brother, Mahad (22), is doing much better. He has a job as Store Assistant at the local Sainsbury's and also goes to college doing economics and business studies courses. He wants to start university in September 2009 and has already been accepted on a course at a good university just outside London.

According to Halimo-Sa'diyo, her children found it very difficult to get jobs because of their lack of skills and poor educational background. Her eldest daughter, Nafiso (26), hasn't achieved much in terms of education. She left school in 1998, undertook some post-16 education courses without attaining any qualifications, got married in 2000 and went to America to be with her husband. She returned to the UK two years later, and again attended some more further education courses without finishing them.

At the age of 24, Dahabo, her younger daughter, has a part-time job as a care assistant. She also goes to college doing GNVQ courses in health and social care. Dahabo says she will finish her courses soon and hopes to go to university afterwards to train as a nurse. However, Halimo-Sa'diyo is a bit uneasy about Dahabo's claims. Her unease grew over the years because Dahabo wouldn't stay in one college or institution and finish her courses. She left school with little or no qualifications in the summer of 2000. She then went to a variety of colleges in the past 8 years or so without completing a course in any one of them. The main problem her children face, in Halimo-Sa'diyo's view, comes from their poor education. She sees her role "as simply giving them a word of advice". "There is nothing else I can do", she says, "They have to do it themselves."

5

Muumin Abdullahi Daud and his son Farhan living in North London, June 1997

Muumin worked as a tutor in a specialist technical college in Somalia prior to his arrival in the UK. He came in to the UK in September 1990 as an overseas student on scholarship. Soon after his arrival, the government was overthrown by armed groups and Somalia descended into anarchy and civil war. Upon completion of his course, there was no country to go back to. He felt a deep sense of shame by what was happening back home and "the human blood that was spilt". Yet out of a sense of national pride, Muumin "refused to seek asylum," but instead applied for an extension of his student visa to remain in the UK. The visa application was refused, and officials at the Home Office said to Muumin: "Somalia is in ruins, so you ought to seek asylum here". He duly applied for one and was granted leave to remain in the UK. He now works as a security guard in London.

His wife and children joined him in April 1993. The wife has had no formal education, but worked as a trader to support her family. Muumin says that he and his wife lost 2 children in the war before the wife and children left Somalia. They also lost their "livelihood and property". The children and their mother "witnessed killings, explosions and destruction of property". They were also "held in detention, and forced to evacuate while their house was looted".

When I interviewed Muumin in June 1997, the family had 3 children: Farhan, a son aged 14, and 2 daughters aged 9 and 4. Farhan went to school for the first time when he arrived in London. According to the father, "his intelligence, politeness, motivation, and self-confidence" surprised the teachers. But now (June 1997) "rather than achieve higher things at school, his performance is going down". The father puts this down to "lack of standards at school" as a result of which his son "lost the strong ambition, and does not value education anymore". In Muumin's view, Farhan "came to realize that commitment, or the lack of it, to one's education is one and the same thing in his school," and that discouraged both the children and the parents.

Muumin says that his children are not socializing with other children in the area because "there are many things and mannerisms that we cannot accept". He sees problems such as children having "no discipline at school ... teachers cannot talk to them, and cannot exclude them". He goes on to say that his children tell him of bad behaviour at school, including "a teacher leaving school after being assaulted by pupils". His fear is that "his children will follow suit when they see that nothing is being done about this (children assaulting teachers)". Not only does Muumin think that standards of education are very poor in the UK, he thinks that his children's education "would have been far more advanced if they were in Somalia than it is now".

Muumin would like to see his children “speak, read, and write the Somali language” so that they won’t lose their “identity, language, culture, and religion”. He doesn’t want to see adaptation that erodes the culture and identity of his children. He describes adaptation as a give and take process whereby the immigrant adopts useful things from the new culture, but also adds to the “British culture the good things in terms of culture and behaviour” that the immigrants possess.

Muumin talks of his family’s experience with racist assaults. A number of Somali families and himself engaged a private tutor to give tuition to their children at Muumin’s house. The number of clients using this tuition service increased over time, in the end numbering up to 50 Somali families. Muumin says it was at that point that “the children who were coming for lessons and the parents who accompanied them were attacked by people from the neighbourhood and elsewhere. They gathered in front of our house to attack us many times. The women had something thrown on them, and their clothes pulled. They also beat the children, and smashed our house. Even the tutor who was here to teach the children was attacked and wounded, and we then had to take him to hospital. In the end, we got evicted and had to move”.

Muumin also mentions incidents of discrimination his family experienced at the GP, housing and social services, and even in the hospital: “... be it at the doctor, hospital, housing or social services, you will experience problems and you will see discrimination on grounds of colour ... we have been discriminated against because we are foreigners. Somalis are seen as refugees, and disliked”. The children also experience similar things, in Muumin’s view, because of their Somali background. They experience it in the form of “abuse both at school and outside school”.

Whilst it is very important for Muumin to provide good education for his children, he thinks “their future is bad” unless school standards improve. Discipline is another area where he is concerned about: “In my culture,

apart from home and society, it was the school that created decent values in the children. The children used to be afraid of the teachers and avoided all kinds of bad behaviours in their presence inside or outside the classroom. In here, whereas we wanted the pupils to gain decency, and respectability, and progress, they gain the opposite: they come with impoliteness”.

Educational outcomes or what children do after school in terms of jobs and opportunities is another area of concern for Muumin: “We have also seen students who were born here and completed their education, and who also know the English language and culture, but are at the same time impoverished. ... These things have not encouraged us that the children will have a good future in here”. Asked about what kind of job he would like Farhan to have after finishing school, Muumin had higher education firmly in his sights for his son: “No! I would not like him to work until he finishes university”.

Finally, two issues keep coming back in Mummin’s analysis of his, and the overall Somali people’s position vis-à-vis the children. The first one is lack of role model in the family and how that affects young people: “Children’s enthusiasm and motivation towards education and their future is boosted by their seeing what their parents do. If the child sees his father or his mother who is not working ... sitting down or doing nothing, or working on a job that is not suitable, they become demoralized. And that would make them feel that even if they became educated, they will not have good future”. The other issue that Muumin sees as being an obstacle to necessary improvements in the lives and learning of Somali children is lack of community organizations to engage the children in outdoor activities, and cultural and educational pursuits. Such schemes, if created by the Somali community, “would have immensely contributed to their children’s physical, educational, and social needs”. But, in his view, none of these community organizations exist.

Fast Forward to 15th January 2009

Indeed 11½ years after my first interview with him, Muumin himself is now running a community organization dedicated to Somali children's education from a small first floor two-room office on a busy street in North London. A large signboard announcing the name of the organization is hanging on the side of the building facing the street. In one of the two rooms, there are about half a dozen small light oak desks with old side chairs beside them. There is also an old computer on top of each desk. In the other room, there was a big dark oak desk with a computer, stacks of loose paper, folders, books, and a phone on top of it. This is the office where Muumin, his son Farhan (25) and a friend operate with a view to improving, in the words of Muumin, "the (educational) achievement of Somali children in this area ...".

In the interview, Muumin spoke animatedly about his experience both as a father, and his views arising from his community work. His 3 children, a boy and two girls, his wife and himself all live together in a permanent accommodation close to where I visited them back in 1997. His son Farhan (25), the oldest child in the family, finished university in July 2007 obtaining a BSc Degree in Biology. Farhan hasn't found a job with his qualifications. But he helps his dad at the community organization which the father set up with a friend. He is also training to become a legal adviser. Muumin's older daughter, Nawal (20), goes to university in London doing a BA Degree in English language and literature. The youngest daughter, at 15, is still in school.

There were problems along the way, of course. One of Muumin's daughters started to stay away from school without permission during her secondary school. She became too lazy to do her work, and would go out with friends. This led to police and social services getting involved with the family. The family decided not to send the girl to school for a year and instead educate her at home in an attempt to, according to Muumin, "stop her from becoming delinquent and antisocial." In the end, the family succeeded in

turning the girl around. She has successfully completed her schooling, and now goes to university.

Muumin's answer to the question "What would you say are the positive aspects of raising children in the UK?" speaks to the values of educational attainment and occupational success that he promotes, both as a parent and as Community Organizer: "Our children ... were provided with educational opportunities that are similar to the ones enjoyed by the children of the host community, and they have not been discriminated against. Thus any Somali pupil who works hard and makes an effort to learn can learn, and can reach tremendous heights". Muumin's skill and effectiveness in directing his children's academic progress (2 going to university and the youngest one expected to do likewise) are a testimony to his devotion to these values.

Muumin also expresses views in terms of what he sees "are the negative aspects of raising children in the UK": "[T]here are many cultural differences that we have with this society. There are things that we feel ashamed about, but that people in this country would see them as normal. These include things like a gay and lesbian (relationship). In our culture, we see those behaviours as morally repugnant. But children who were born here see these things as normal or natural. These are some of the things that are contrary to our position, but may to our children look or sound normal in the long-run or that they may themselves even act in these ways."

His views are perhaps even more conservative when it comes to the question of what "Somali families worry most about raising girls in the UK". In answer to this question, Muumin had the following to say: "We Somalis worry about raising girls in the UK, and that worry is based on our cultural differences with other people. This may also be due to our religious worldview. Naturally we see girls as *Ceeb* (shame). What I mean by this is that if the girl is not in her parents' house she must be in her husband's or her brother's house, otherwise she could bring dishonour to the family.

What we mean by dishonour is that if the girl befriends someone and gets pregnant, that is a shame in our culture. If she becomes a prostitute, that puts the rest of the family to shame. As such, we are more caring towards the daughter than towards the son. If you have a daughter born in this country, the Somali family will keep worrying about her more than a son until that daughter matures and has her own home, husband and family.”

While all Somali parents I interviewed were concerned about protecting their children from neighbourhood risks, I think Muumin’s sounds by far the most restrictive parenting strategy I have come across. That may be why of all the young women I interviewed (N= 14), Muumin’s daughter, Nawal (20), was the only girl who was fully veiled. When I visited her at home for the interview, she was wearing a full black Islamic *niqab* with only a small opening for the eyes. She confirmed that she wears her full veil to university on a regular basis (see Nawal’s story, Appendix A).

Muumin believes the problem with Somali boys is that they are “getting involved in gangs and drug dealing, and failing in education.” As a result, he says, many Somali boys have ended up in prison.

6

Awralo Abdisamad Dhoorre and her daughter Weris living in North London, July 1997

Awralo arrived in the UK in September 1989 as an asylum-seeker from Somalia. “The major problem happened after I left”, she says. Her 3 daughters, Weris (12 at the time of the interview) and two young women aged 19 and 22, joined her in December 1992. The eldest daughter got married in 1994, has 2 children and lives with her husband. The father of Awralo’s children joined them “at some point in 1995”. He arrived a physically disabled man following a massive stroke. Awralo and the girls had

to look after him when he arrived but after a while because of disagreements between him and his wife, the father left the family. Awralo was now a single-mother looking after her two girls.

In Somalia, Awralo received “little private education which amounted to nothing, and cannot be of any help today”. She was a full-time mother back home, looking ‘after the house and the children’. She is now doing the same in here. She says her knowledge of English ‘is average’. She doesn’t think that they as a family “have adapted in any significant way at all”. As a result, says Awralo, she longs for a return home to Somalia. She has negative feelings about her (and her children’s) presence in this country: “we have no value in here because we are foreigners, and nothing else”.

It is important for Awralo that her children “speak in their native tongue as their first language”. Hence she “endeavours that they learn how to write the Somali language”. She wants her children “not to abandon their culture”. Clarifying what this culture meant for her, Awralo talks “religion in Islam as the first pillar of the culture”. She would also “like to see time apportioned for children to be taught religion at school”. To this end, given the opportunity, she would take her children to “an Islamic school and nowhere else”.

Awralo mentions on several occasions that she has not come across “a bigger problem than that related to education” of her children. She is unhappy with the school that her daughter attends. The children need support with their school work, she says, and there is no support she can give them at home “because I am not educated”. But there is also “no support for us from the authorities”. She is critical of the school for failing to “inculcate decent behaviour in our children”. She also feels that the Somali community as a whole has no one “that advocates for our children’s education”.

Awralo complains of “too many racist attacks” which her family experienced in the area where they lived. It was neighbours who attacked them “with a gun”, she said. As part of the attack Awralo and her girls “were forced into a corner, and everything in the house was smashed to pieces”. The police were called but they did nothing about it, she said. That incident left them deeply depressed. It also impacted on Weris in the sense that her behaviour and performance at school deteriorated. Issues of perceived discrimination and prejudice also form part of what Awralo says she has experienced. These prejudices are evident, she says, in her interactions with officials in public bodies, and are based on the notion that they (the Somalis) “are black, and Muslim”.

On the whole, Awralo remains deeply pessimistic about her children’s future in the UK: “I am not educated, their father is disabled, and [we] have no support from the authorities ... all of this severely restricts my children’s future position in this country”. Yet Awrala would like her daughter to reach a university level education so that she could have a good job: “I would like her especially to work in medicine so that she could help the people of her country later on”.

Fast Forward to 5th January 2009

As required by etiquette or social convention, I was accompanied by my wife when I attended Awralo’s home on the above date for this much delayed follow-up interview. The family lives in a top floor flat of a large council estate, so we had to ring an intercom for access. Our call was answered by Awralo who let us in. We then walked up the stairs to get to their flat. At the door, we were greeted by a lively toddler (a 3 year old boy, by my estimate) with apparently some form of speech impediment. We greeted the family with the standard “*Assalaamu Alaykum*” (Peace be upon you). I then extended my hand to handshake the young boy who happily returned my handshake. My wife also extended her hand to him, but he wouldn’t take it and he wouldn’t even look at her. At that point, Awralo retorted that “the

boy does not accept handshake from women". We were then ushered into the living room, with the young boy himself leading the way. But as soon as we sat on the sofas, the boy started jumping up and down, making noises which we could not understand. Awralo, who by then we knew was his grandma, said that the boy was making those gestures to protest against my wife sitting in the living room in the presence of a man. She said "the boy knows in our house that men sit in the living room whereas women sit separately in another room." The boy wouldn't stop the noise and the hustle until my wife stood up and went into a separate room where the boy's mother and another of Awralo's daughters were sitting.

Awralo still lives in the same estate as before, but in a different house. "My old house was demolished by the Council so I had to move to this one which is also permanent," she says. Two of her 3 daughters and two grand children, including the boy just described above, live with her in this property.

The 2 daughters who live with her are Weris (23) and Timiro (30). The latter is the mother of the 2 grand-children, a boy of 3 and a baby girl. The children are fathered by two different men. Timiro got married abroad to the two men at two different times. She got married to the first one in 2004 in Somalia, and they have lived there for a while together. They divorced as a result, I am told by Timiro herself, of incessant demands for money by the husband's family in Somalia. She got married again in Somalia after the birth of her first child (the boy described above). The second man that she married is her current husband who is still living in Somalia. Both her two children were born in the UK.

Awralo says Timiro has learning difficulties, but does not specify which learning disability her daughter suffers from. Whilst Timiro went on to do courses of various types and in various institutions in London over a long period of time after finishing school, her mother says, there is not much success about her educationally or career-wise because of her learning

difficulties. As I write, 17.06.09 am, I am told by a family friend that Timiro's husband (the 2nd husband she is now married to and who is also the father of her baby daughter) was killed about a week or so ago in the latest round of fighting which began in Mogadishu on May 7th, 2009 between Islamist rebels and the government. The next day, I called Awralo and her daughter to offer my condolences for the death of Timiro's husband in Somalia.

Weris, her youngest daughter, is the other person living with Awralo in her house. Weris is a nursing student at a top London university, and has given me her own personal story. Weris has spent some years in Somalia recently, but the accounts of Awralo and her daughter's are inconsistent. In the words of Awralo, "My daughter was big enough when she decided to return (to Somalia). She first went to ... [a middle eastern country], and then moved to Somalia. When she reached Somalia, she liked the place. I also wanted her to get to know about her heritage culture and country ... that she gets to know the traditions and the culture of our home country, and it was all a success."

For Weris, the story of her return to Somalia and her presence in Mogadishu for several years raises troubling questions. Nonetheless, she'd overcome most of her difficulties related to this return journey and has embarked on a path of personal development and educational advancement (see Weris' story, Appendix A).

Awralo's eldest daughter, Qamar (33) who got married in 1994, has five children and is expecting her 6th child. Qamar got married straight after finishing school, because she became pregnant with her first child. She never returned to education after that, hence she hasn't finished her (post-GCSE) GNVQ courses. Qamar has her family fully intact, and lives in another borough of North London with her husband and children. According to Awralo, "the problems of separation and divorce we hear about nowadays haven't affected her family, *alhamdu lillaahi* (thank God)."

**Daruuro Abdulle Guuleed and her son Alas living in North London,
July 1997**

Daruuro is a single mother looking after 2 sons, aged 14 and 12. She arrived as a refugee from Somalia with her children, but without a husband in November 1990. She was only educated to primary school level, and was engaged in business to support her family before the war started. She says her family lost 'their livelihood' as a result of the conflict. While Daruuro and her children were not physically attacked, they decided to run away from the dangers lurking around.

Daruuro does not speak English, and tells me that finds it difficult to adjust to life in London. She tries to speak Somali to her sons so that they do not lose their parents' language. The children are bilingual and speak both Somali and English. She would also like them to become literate in Somali. In her own words: "they should not abandon Somali because it is their mother tongue". She thinks it is very important that her children maintain their "Somali identity, religion, and language". To this end, she takes them to the mosque (which also has a *Madrassa* in it) several times a week for religious and cultural learning.

I interviewed Daruuro about Alas, her elder son, which was attending a local secondary school at the time. She said that his behaviour and attendance were good, but she was "not really satisfied" with the school he attended. She wasn't sure what the future had in store for him, but she was clear that she wanted him "to attain a university degree or an equivalent qualification". She also wanted him to get a job requiring a university level education.

Fast Forward to 14th January 2009

Daruuro runs her own shop in a busy main road in north London where I visited her couple of times to make arrangements for the interview. Because of her busy schedule, in the end, we settled for a telephone interview. Daruuro's sons have now grown-up, are both unmarried, and are still living at home with their mum. Both young men also help at the shop. Alas is 25 years of age and has recently found a job as a 'Driver of CCTV-equipped smart car for a London Council'. Matan is 23 and, according to mum, has completed an IT course at university, specializing in web-design. Matan has then secured a good job with a company in London. Unfortunately because of the economic slow-down, he was recently laid-off. He is now doing further IT courses with a private training group, according to Daruuro, all paid for by himself.

Daruuro is very much disappointed that she was unable to help her children at school owing to her lack of formal education and familiarity with English. In a vivid account of her children's experience at school, Daruuro has it: "Because of my ignorance and lack of language, there was nothing about school that I could help with the children. If I looked at their workbooks, there was nothing I could understand or say about them. If the teachers sent messages or instructions home, I couldn't read or understand them. At times when I looked at their journals and found teachers' handwritten notes in red, I would ask them to tell me what the notes say. So if the teacher was to say something or sent me some advice or directions, there was nothing I could do about. And there wasn't much in terms of complaints or issues that I was made aware of in all those times that they were going to school. My sons would go to school and would come back home. That was the routine. There was once or twice that I received a complaint against one of them that he was chatty in class, and I was summoned to school for that. There was no other time I was called into school, as far as I can remember. And there was no other support in terms of lessons or school subjects that I could help them with because I was just not able to do that."

As with all the other parents I interviewed in 1997 Daruuro had at the time expressed hope for her children's success. For instance, she wanted her son "to attain a university degree or an equivalent qualification". But looking back now she says that she should have been more cautious to find out exactly what the children themselves wanted to do and what they were able to do rather than her deciding for them. In Daruuro's own words: "We always want our children to have good education, and that they go to a very good university and we also point to a career which we want our children to have. That is how we see things. What is missing from this approach, however, is a recognition of what the children themselves want or are able to do ... looking back, I think these things are too late now".

Unrelated to Daruuro's aspirations for her children or her shop, the family were the subject of an anti-terror police raid in the middle of 2006. The raid, involving (possibly armed?) officers in protective clothing, was carried out before dawn as the family slept. No one was injured or taken into custody, but the house was searched and items, such as a computer, camera, documents and travel cards were seized by police. Daruuro says her children and herself were in total shock to have awoken to a police raid on their house. They were utterly embarrassed by the sudden arrival of flashing police lights and forensic teams and plain cloth detectives swooping down on their house. In Daruuro's own words, "All the neighbours were outside watching the drama unfolding in our house. That was quite an embarrassment. We don't know what people have said quietly, but they may have thought that we were terrorists living in their neighbourhood."

The police returned all the items they confiscated four months later, and apologized to the family. Daruuro says she has come to terms with the police operation and decided to "let pass what happened," adding "these things happen to other people too so we should pay no attention to it and just carry on with our lives".

Hussein Guure Waasuge and his son Zaki living in Noth London, July 1997

Hussein Waasuge and his wife have a big family to look after. They have 8 children, 6 boys and 2 girls, aged between 1 and 12. Mr. Waasuge arrived in the UK in 1993, and his family joined him in 1995. He is a nurse by training, and had worked as a 'camp medical officer' in Somalia before coming to the UK. His wife had only a primary level education in Somalia, and never worked outside the house. She does not speak English and continues to be a full-time mother. Hussein speaks English fluently, and has a job as a security guard.

In Hussein's words: "all members of the family have witnessed armed violence including heavy artillery fire, and faced extreme deprivation at various points before fleeing Somalia. The children have had their education completely disrupted as a result of the war". Upon arrival in the UK, the children started school for the first time in their lives. Hussein puts the difficulties they face thus: "The children never went to school in Somalia. In this country, children are placed in class according to their age, but not according to the grade or level of schooling accomplished. Zaki was put in a class with children who have been in school for 5 years. ... Whilst he has learnt a lot over the past two years, he still does not compare favourably with his classmates".

Hussein is happy that his children are in full-time education now, but says that their future may not be very bright. This is because "they are in receipt of negative cultural influences". To counter these, according to Hussein, the parents talk to the children at home in Somali in the hope that they will maintain their language and tradition. The children also attend *Madrassa*, and the local mosque several times a week. There they learn Somali language and literature, the *Koran* and the prayers. All of this, in Hussein's

view, will help the children become acquainted with the Islamic tradition, and in the process enable them to adjust better to life in the UK.

Like all the other parents above, Hussein would like to see his son Zaki achieve a university degree or equivalent qualification. He also wants the son to do a job requiring university level education, such as becoming a dentist, doctor, lawyer, scientist, etc.

Fast Forward to 26 December 2008

Hussein's family had to move houses 3 times since 1997, and are still living in a temporary accommodation. They had two more children, a daughter now aged 10 and a 7 year old boy. Clearly this family's efforts to be rehoused in a permanent accommodation have been hampered by their large size. As a rule, unless you are a buyer, the larger the family the greater is the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation in London. On 13.08.2009 as I was writing Fardosa's (Hussein's eldest daughter) story, I learned that the family were moved for the umpteenth time to another temporary accommodation far away from the one I visited them at the end of December 2008.

On a more positive note, Hussein himself took up courses successfully completing a BSc degree in public health. He went on to do an MPH (Master of Public Health) at a top London school of medicine. He now works as a health-care professional with a primary care trust in north London. Hussein was the only parent whose interview was fully conducted in English.

Hussein's second eldest son, Kassim (now aged 21), had been sent back to Somalia sometime ago because he "dropped out of school ... and got involved with gangs". The father now regrets having had to make that decision because Kassim "found (in Somalia) unlimited freedom" to do worse. In the telling words of Hussein: "There was no one telling him off. He did whatever he wanted to do and more, and had learned a lot from bad

people in there at a time when he was young and very vulnerable. People out there preyed on him. Here was a young man who couldn't speak that much Somali and was mainly speaking English. They took advantage of him, and that was a very big mistake on my part."

When Kassim was brought back to London after a few years, he went straight back to his old friends and resumed his 'delinquent and criminal behaviour'. Hussein reports that Kassim's latest return to Somalia was a choice made by Kassim himself as opposed to the earlier travels which were initiated and encouraged by the parents. The father says Kassim has changed and because of that the family has generously supported him. Kassim now has a wife and 2 children in Somalia. He is also said to be operating a 5 hectare family farm with 200 fruit bearing mango trees, 500 lemon trees, coconut trees, and onion plants (see Kassim's story, Appendix B). In a telephone conversation I had with Hussein on the 25th of June 2009 to establish the actual metric size of the farm, he also tells me that he bought a farm tractor and machinery from London and shipped them to Kassim in Somalia about two weeks ago at a cost of £10,000. This equipment is to be used in the farm by Kassim and his co-workers.

Of Hussein's 9 other children, 7 are under 18 and still in full-time education. A girl of 20 (Fardosa) has a job as a Classroom Support Worker and also hopes to go to university this year 2009 (see Fardosa's story, Appendix A). Hussein's eldest son, Zaki (23), has still not found a job having recently deferred his studies for a BSc Degree in computer networking at a local university. The reason for this deferral is said to be, according to both father and son, that Zaki wanted to get married this year (2009) to his fiancé and therefore needs to work to save some money for this forthcoming marriage. He will then at some point in the near future, they say, return to his university education and finish the course (see Zaki's story, Appendix B).

Hussein makes a distinction between those children who were born in Somalia and came here at a young age, and those who were born here and

started school as everybody else in this country. He believes the group who came here at a young age face difficulties in terms of education and qualifications unless they worked very hard and applied themselves. The group that were born here, according to Hussein, should do better because they have done all their schooling in this country. But this group too faces issues of racism and other problems.

As an example of the latter group, Hussein talks about his son Daadir who at 17 is doing exceptionally well at school. In his words: “[Daadir] started nursery school in this country. He is now in Year 11 and will be taking his GCSEs next year. We expect him to achieve top grades such as As and above in his exams”. On the other hand, Hussein’s eldest son Zaki (23) represents the other group. According to Hussein: “Zaki started school at Year 6 upon his arrival in the UK based on his chronological age, and there was no help for him from school. What happens to a child who’s never been to school and comes into country, and be made to sit (in class) with Year 6 children? When the teachers assess him and realize that he can’t catch up with their group, they completely neglect him. There is literally no help for him (because) the teachers think that his position is helpless so why would they bother to do extra for him”.

That is what happened to his older children, as Hussein himself tells it: “The teachers expected nothing of these children because they saw them as failures. That is how the system in this country works; and I think it’s got to change. If you welcome a family into your country and give them asylum, and you also say that you want to see their children having the same chances of success as everyone else, then you’ve got to put in the resources to help the children catch up at school. You should at least help the children achieve basic literacy and basic education before simply dumping them in a class where they’ll gain very little from it. Because none of this happened, Zaki struggled very hard starting school at Year 6 and then moving on into secondary school a year later. Imagine someone going into secondary school who can’t even read and write at a very basic level! He

ended up leaving his GCSEs with Ds and Es and that kind of thing. He then had to redo his exams which took him roughly 2 or 3 years more”.

Young men growing up in the UK scorn traditional morals, are lazy and do not want to make a success of themselves, according to Hussein. He tells me the story of some Somali people whose children are studying medicine in China and India. He says higher education in these countries is affordable. But also the young people themselves will do their utmost once placed in such an environment. Hussein plans to take one of his sons, Bashar (18), this summer to India for university education. He says Bashar is a test case for him and if he becomes a success, he will seriously consider sending most of the others after him.

9

Abdi Iidow Sharraawe and his son Jamal living in North London, July 1997

Abdi, his wife and 5 children were living in North London when I interviewed him in July 1997 for this project. They had 4 girls and a boy, Jamal, who was 16 at the time and went to a local secondary school. Jamal had two older sisters, both at 17. The other 2 children were much younger, aged 4 and 2. Abdi's older children are from his previous marriage whereas the younger ones are with his present wife. Abdi arrived from Somalia in 1989, and the family joined him in 1992.

Abdi was an officer in the Somali army before going into exile. As a soldier, he was asked to fight in the north of the country when the civil war erupted there in 1988. He did not want to do that, he said, so he decided to leave the country. Abdi had a university education in Somalia, and has recently completed an “HND Computer Studies Course” in London. But he's unemployed at present.

Abdi talks about his older children's experiences in the war and the dire threats they faced having been displaced from town to town. Jamal in particular "was seriously affected by the war to the point that he had to take up a gun, an AK 47, to protect his uncle's store/shop whenever the uncle went to the mosque for prayers". But the children's grand-parents (Abdi's elderly dad and mum) stepped in to protect Jamal and his sisters. The children were enrolled in a *Madrasa* by the grandparents to give them a "good religious upbringing". So when the children arrived in the UK, according to Abdi, they were "quiet, pious youngsters".

But Abdi also senses that the "quiet, pious youngsters" he'd helped bring into the UK are going to change. That change would arise, in Abdi's view, as a result "of the influence of the TV, the influence of their peers, and the environment". Abdi and his wife try to keep Jamal on the straight and the narrow by helping him avoid temptations that can ruin his life. Abdi says that he tries "to prevent the children from using Khat, cigarettes and all other forms of addiction". The parents' fear is also that Jamal might be led astray by other kids. Abdi says: "We ask him questions like who are you going out with? Who are they? When did you go? When did you come back? What are you going to watch on TV, & when, etc?"

Abdi is particularly critical of the school that Jamal attends as being "educationally poor and underperforming". Jamal has been showing signs of "disappointment and demoralization" about school recently. Abdi places responsibility for this on "poor school environment". In the words of Abdi: "Jamal is very weak educationally because he hasn't learned much from that school. I prefer the girls to him. They are more motivated than him".

Abdi tells me that he and his wife are under huge pressure because of their status as poor refugees from Somalia living in isolation and loneliness. The fact of them being poor means, according to Abdi, that they "cannot afford the educational resources that the children require". The parents also fear

that their children may not be able to cope with what they as adults cannot cope with. Religion and prayers help them to overcome their difficulties, Abdi says.

The children are also sent to the mosque and to a *Madrassa* at least once a week to learn about religion and the Koran. The aim of this exercise, according to Abdi, “is to remind the children of their religion and the link back to their origin”. The maintenance of Somali as a language and culture in the children is also very important for Abdi. In particular, he wants them to learn how to write and read Somali. As an example, Abdi mentions letters from his previous wife in Somalia to her children (Jamal and sisters), but the children cannot read them. That is a shame, he says.

In Abdi’s view, education will determine the future of his children: “If Jamal’s education turns out to be bad, his future is in the dark. But if his education turns out to be good, it is possible that his future might turn out to be bright”. The challenge for the Somali children including his own, according to Abdi, is thus: “We have no community organizations, nor are our people communicating to face the challenges together”.

Fast Forward to 21st November 2008

I interviewed Abdi on several occasions to construct this second story. I also talked to his wife over the phone, a few times. During our 21st November interview, Abdi was in Nairobi so I had to contact him by telephone to conduct the conversation. He told me that he returned to Somalia about 7 months ago to work as an official representative for the TFG in a region outside Mogadishu.

After only 4 months in that extremely difficult post, Abdi’s administration was overthrown by Islamic insurgents locally known as *al-Shabaab* [The Youth]. He said he had to run for his life with some of his officials, for many days trekking across no man’s land in the borders between Ethiopia, Kenya

and Somalia. He eventually safely arrived in Kenya. He said he'd hoped to return to his post if the ongoing negotiations between the TFG and its rival Islamic insurgents in neighbouring Djibouti bear fruit. He wasn't sure when that might happen though, so he was planning to come back to the UK to stay with his family for the time being. Prior to travelling to Somalia, Abdi was working as a mini-cab driver in London.

Abdi's family had changed houses twice and now lives in a permanent accommodation in an area not far away from where they lived in 1997. Abdi and his wife had 3 more children (all boys), now aged 11, 9 and 4. The youngest child has Down's syndrome. His older children, Jamal (M, 27) and his two sisters Fatima (28) and Suuban (28) live close at hand. Suuban is Abdi's niece, not his biological daughter. He brought her into the UK at the age of 12 alongside his own children when her parents died in the wars in Somalia. Suuban grew up in Abdi's household and has never known another family. At 28, she is a nursing student and is the only one among the older crop who, Abdi believes, has 'succeeded in her education and has a good career ahead of her' (see Suuban's story, Appendix A). Fatima (28) got married as soon as she left school. She now has two children and lives with her husband.

Jamal, on the other hand, has not done anything at all with his life after leaving school. He hasn't gone to college in any proper sense. He has no qualifications, no skills, and no employment experience. He has not worked, and doesn't like education. He hasn't married or formed a family either. According to the father, Jamal is out and about at night with friends, and spends his days sleeping. He is really down and out, and hasn't figured out where he wants to be or what he wants to do with his life. Therefore, according to Abdi, Jamal's future is very bleak indeed (see Jamal's story, Appendix B).

Abdi took a dim view of raising children in the UK. In his own words: "Children growing up here are lazy and do not want to work hard, and there

is nothing you can do about that as a parent. If you try to discipline them, they will disobey you because they know that the law is on their side. Physical chastisement is totally out of the question, and even trying to mildly rebuke them can give you a problem. They know the law is always on their side, and because of this they're just uncontrollable."

Abdi's view is that the children lack discipline, and you cannot punish them (i.e., physically chastise them) because of the laws of the land. Their main diet at home is the toxic TV, and they will not even help with domestic chores. Teenage problems compounded these difficulties. Children won't come back home after school. They will not even come home sometimes, he says, and with our concern for their safety we call the police. The police will then come very late in the night and that will be even more distressing for you because of their attitude.

Children are not achieving educationally in the UK, according to Abdi, because they have not been taught very well at school. Abdi goes further to say that you cannot rely on these schools for the education of your children. Hence, you must make your own private arrangements to educate their children. In the case of his family, Abdi reports that they have tutored all their children, including the older ones, privately as much as they could. At present, 4 school-age children of Abdi's are receiving private tuition at the cost of £80.00 a week and the family is prepared to continue paying for this service until the children finish school.

The long catalogue of his concerns, as they pertain to Somali young people, include the following: unemployment; lack of educational success; lack of qualifications, skills and job experience. In Abdi's own words, "Some Somali youngsters have become really bad that it is nearly impossible to turn them around. A majority of Somali young people are like my son, Jamal. They have no qualifications and no skills or experience to obtain employment. The parents, on the other hand, are not in a position to help them with any of these issues".

Abdi returned to the UK recently after our long-distance interview, and was kind enough to meet up and sign my consent forms. We met on a Sunday evening, 11th of January 2009, at his house in North London where his wife served us a delicious meal. Over the next two hours, Abdi talked endlessly about his toil and travails in Somalia for the last 7 months. A particularly memorable event occurs when Abdi, as he arrived at the main town of his region by a small private jet from Nairobi in a broad daylight, decides to visit his 90 year old father who happens to live about 10 miles away from Abdi's HQ. Abdi's security detail, a large number of local government militias who are meant to protect him, escorted by an Ethiopian military convoy arrive at the father's place.

The father is a revered holy man in this part of Somalia and, at this ripe age of 90, does not want to be thought of, let alone seen, changing to the enemy's side (as the Ethiopians are viewed by the Somalis). Bewildered by the presence of heavy military armour and hundreds of young men with guns outside his courtyard, the venerable Sheikh emerges from his house and, gripping Abdi's hand in a strong clasp, greets his son with an artful question that would set the scene for Abdi's short tenure of the leadership of that beleaguered region in Somalia: "Son, are you seeking honour and glory in this?" Abdi and his companions were ushered into a section of the house before he could even think of the implications of the question, let alone answer it. As their old local customs require, the father sacrificed a mighty bull, goats and sheep. Later on, the father tells Abdi that 'neither profit nor glory' will come his way from the job he was trying to do, and urged him to return to his wife and children in London. Sadly for Abdi and for ordinary Somalis in that region, the Sheikh's prophecy that nothing good will come out of his son's tenure was fulfilled in few short months when Islamic insurgents overran Abdi's nascent administration.

Abdi continued his engagement with the TFG in a neighbouring country, not as an official representative of a region but in some other role. His wife,

whom I spoke to when I began to write up his story, tells me that Abdi has taken 2 of their children (a girl aged 16, and a boy of 9) to a country in East Africa and enrolled them in a top private school. She says the children themselves were surprised about the level of knowledge and learning at the institution they joined. She also tells me that Abdi is preparing to come back to the UK and take the remaining two children, a girl of 13 and a boy of 11, with him back to that country to be educated alongside those already there.

Abdi arrived back in the UK at the end of August 2009. We spoke over the phone on few occasions, and arranged to meet up. That meeting took place last Sunday evening, 1st November 2009. Abdi tells me that after arriving Kenya, he went over to Djibouti where the newly expanded Somali Parliament was meeting to elect a new President. On January 31st President Sharif Sh. Ahmed was elected for a 3 year term by the TFG Parliament in Djibouti. Abdi has neither made it to the Parliament, nor to the Cabinet. He has also not been reinstated to his old post. Whilst he doesn't spell out in those terms, Abdi clearly had failed to be appointed for a position by the new government. The killing of Somali Security Minister Omar Hashi Aden [a man who was related to Abdi in Somali clan/ethnic terms] together with 50 other people by a suicide bomber in Abdi's former regional HQ on the 18th of June 2009 was the last straw that had sent Abdi back to his family in London, and to exile again.

His earlier appointment was for a short tenure of 3 months. But it was this short-lived governorship that saddled Abdi with debts of tens of thousands of dollars. He tells me that he paid \$40,000 of his own personal money in wages and expenses. He also borrowed large amounts of money from local businesses. But the government has not repaid the loan. Abdi says the repayment of a debt is just, and that is why he had to use his own little savings to pay off the debts. He is still paying off some of these debts.

Upon returning to London, Abdi borrowed some money from a friend to buy a new car, and then went straight back to his old minicabbing job. He sold

his previous car last year at a knock-down price. That is when he joined the TFG, and was travelling to Somalia. He now looks back with regret on the pain that decision had caused him and his family. His plans to set up a small business for his elder son are now in tatters. The only consolation for the family is that two of their younger children are now being educated at a top school in a country in East Africa. Abdi has plans to send two others to join them in the near future. As for him, he will carry on with his minicabbing to keep up with the remittances, and to continue paying off the debts. Abdi's hopes for a return to political office in Somalia have, for now, been relegated to the back burner.

10

Mohamed Abdulle Ga'al and his daughter Ubah living in West London, July 1997.

Mr. Ga'al and his wife have a large family of 8 children. Ubah, at 17, is their eldest daughter. They also have 4 other girls and 3 boys, all younger than Ubah. According to Mohamed, his family and many of his relations "have all been deprived of a normal way of life by the war in Somalia". He arrived in the UK in 1990 whereas his wife and children came in 1993. Mohamed is a college graduate, and was a 'senior military officer' in the Somali army prior to his arrival in the UK. He is currently unemployed. His wife was a school teacher back home, but she is now a full-time mother.

It is important for Mohamed that his children maintain their home language so they speak Somali at home: "We all speak Somali so that the children won't lose the ability to communicate in their mother tongue". He is also of the view that the children ought to learn "how to read and write Somali so that they won't lose their culture". Asked about examples of this culture, Mohamed talks about "Islam as religion and culture, and that the children follow the values and traditions of our society". His children go to "the

mosque and to a *Madrassa* several times a week” to be anchored in these traditions and religious teachings.

Mohamed sees several problems facing his own and other Somali children at school, but emphasizes two in particular: “The first problem is to do with language. Unless you have the linguistic background, you cannot learn anything at school. But language support is minimal. The second problem is that Somali children have no educational basis upon arrival, and are entered into schools with children who have been in the system throughout their entire careers. They cannot catch up with these children, so they fail or drop out altogether”.

Ubah was initially “struggling to learn at school”. The family then hired a private tutor for her to be taught at home. As a result, “she made an enormous improvement”. Here is how Mohamed describes what happened: “In the 1st year, she was just sitting and not understanding anything in class. In the 2nd year, she could understand 30 percent of the lessons taught in class. She took the GCSEs, but did not succeed to get the grades she wanted to be able to go to university. She wanted to become a doctor, and we supported her in this. We have put in an enormous effort in her learning through private tuition. This year, thankfully, she gained distinction in her exams and will go on to do what she wanted to do at university”.

Ubah is “very good in all her school subjects”. Mohamed would like her to go to university and train to become a medical doctor. However, he is critical of the advice given to her by staff in the college: “After taking her GCSEs, she sought counsel from college advisers. But when she suggested that she wanted to become a medical doctor, the adviser said that she couldn't be one. As such they have disappointed and discouraged my daughter. The adviser said that to train as a medical doctor, one needs to have 5 A levels. That (to me) is a pressure to discourage her and, essentially, a bad advice.”

Fast Forward to 6th March 2009

Because Mohamed Ga'al had gone to Somalia and had been away from his family for some time, I conducted interviews with his wife Jimo and 5 of their children. Jimo tells me that her husband has become a politician and alternates between Somalia and the UK. In late January 2009, she travelled to Djibouti to see him as the newly expanded parliament in which her husband is a member was meeting to elect a new President for Somalia. Throughout the interview, Jimo alludes to the issues of single parenthood affecting the Somali community. However, she mentions them only once in relation to her own situation, when she says this: "The main challenge Somali boys face is that the role of the father is missing in their lives. Like my son Adil would have a lot that he could say to his dad but not to me. But my husband was often absent ... Boys want other boys to play with. I just feel the role of the father is missing here."

The family has moved houses twice since 1997. They have now been living in a permanent Council accommodation for the past three years, in the same area I visited them back in 1997. Jimo also talks about the changes to her family composition. They have had one more child, a boy, born in May 2002. He's now in Year 2 of primary school. Their eldest daughter, Ubah (29), got married and moved to a Middle Eastern country with her husband who works in a bank. The couple have 3 children together. Ubah, as well as being a full-time mother, is also doing a Masters' Degree on a part-time basis, and plans to go back to work after their youngest child starts nursery.

Altogether Jimo had 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls. One boy died young (circumstances not explained). The youngest 2 children, both boys aged 6 and 13, were born here in the UK. The 2 just above them, a girl aged 18 and a boy of 20, were born in Germany where the family lived for a few years before arriving in the UK. The remaining children, 4 young women and one young man, were born in Somalia. I'd call this the older group and they

include Ubah (mentioned above), Deeqa (f, 27), Habboon (f, 26), Adil (m, 25), and Zahra (f, 24).

Each and everyone of the older group went to university in the UK. Ubah obtained an economics degree before moving to the UAE; Deeqa has a BA Degree in English language and literature and works as an Editorial Assistant for a publishing firm; Habboon is a trainee solicitor working with a law firm in London; Adil has completed a BA Degree in Business Management in July 2008 but hasn't found a job as yet; Zahra is a Registered Nurse, having completed a BSc (Hons) degree in adult nursing, and works at a university hospital in the Midlands. Zahra is the only other girl who got married and lives with her husband, a fellow Somali who works in the same Midland town (see the stories of Deeqa, Habboon, Adil and Zahra in Appendix A & B).

Of the younger group of children who were born abroad, there is Guure (m, 20) who is at university in London doing a BSc (Hons) in diagnostic radiography which is linked to NHS careers. Guure wants to work for the NHS upon completion of his course, according to Jimo. There is also Farhiya (f, 18) who, as the top student in her college last year, wants to read medicine. She applied to various medical schools in London and elsewhere in the UK, but unfortunately wasn't successful. She has now been offered a place on a Biomedical Science BSc (Hons) course at a top London university to start in September 2009. Upon completion, according to the mother, Farhiya intends to study medicine for a further 4 years through the Graduate Entrant's Programme (GEP).

According to Jimo, finding work is difficult for young Somali people even when they finish university. She adds that there is an element of racism and discrimination making it difficult to get a job in comparison to other groups. Contrasting the position of Asian young people to that of the Somalis, here is what she says: "For example, there was a *Timajilac* (Indian) boy in our area who went to university with my son Adil. Whereas Adil obtained a First

Class Honours Degree, the Indian boy received a 2:1 (Upper Second-Class Honours) or was it a 2:2 (Lower Second-Class Honours), I can't really remember! They (Adil & the other boy) were always friends up to their high school. I used to give them a lift when they went to play with friends, and I'd bring them back home when they finished. The boy's dad would also take them out to play together. That boy and my Adil both graduated on the 13th of July 2008. By the end of July or August 2008, the boy was in full employment. Adil is nearing the end of his 1st year after graduation and hasn't still secured a job."

Jimo suggests that the Asians/Indians can secure scholarships to go to university. They can also get a placement or a job while still at university in a variety of places such as a GP, a bank, a shop, or a similar private practice because their people are everywhere. And because of this, she says, "When their child graduates, he/she will have a job already prepared for them."

She points out that both Adil and his older sister Deeqa (f, 27) found it very hard to secure jobs after completing their university education. Whereas Deeqa now has a job as an editorial assistant with a publishing firm, Adil hasn't got a job as yet. He goes online every morning to complete job application forms, and hasn't secured anything so far.

In contrast to these two, Habboon (f, 26) trained as a lawyer and got a job with a Solicitor's firm straight away. She worked for them for a year before returning to study to complete her LPC (Legal Practice Certificate). She has now a training contract with the firm, and will continue in her role. Zahra (24) trained as a nurse, and started looking for a job. On the first day of her job search, she applied for 5 different hospital positions online. She was offered an interview for each and every position she applied for. She went for all the interviews, and was offered a job by each and everyone of the hospitals advertising these positions.

Thus, according to Jimo, if Somali young people can do health-related courses, they will get jobs. That is why her son Guure (20) is training as a Radiographer at university and in a hospital; and that is also why her daughter Farhiya (18) is starting a biomedical course. Young people who train as teachers would also get jobs straight away, she says. As an example, she talks about the girls who went to university with her daughter Deeqa (28). Because they trained as teachers, they have all got jobs immediately as they came out of university and have had their student loans cleared for them.

There are still other fields where young people can train for jobs, Jimo says. The example here comes from the husband of Zahra (Jimo's nurse daughter). He trained as an Electronic Engineer. Upon completion of his university course, he applied for six different jobs. He was offered interviews in all of them, and was later shortlisted by all of them. He was so successful (in his job hunt) that everyone of the six companies/organizations offered him a job. He had to seek advice from his university careers service as to which job he should take up. Moreover, Jimo mentions that her nephew who is the same age as her son Guure (20) is also doing an aeronotic engineering course. Hopefully he will have a job at the end of it, she says.

In Jimo's view, if Somali parents could help their children in some small ways when they are at school, such as hiring private tutors for them or taking them to after-school clubs to help them with sciences and maths etc., the children can make it to university to train in fields/disciplines where they could be guaranteed a job. She acknowledges, having experienced this in her own family, that it is difficult for young Somali people to get jobs. But then, Jimo asks, "what shall we do? Shall we leave the country?" In answer, she says this "I don't think so! We need to think in a new way. We're not leaving the country. We know it is difficult for our young people to get jobs, but stay put and let us redirect our youngsters to fields/disciplines such as health or engineering where they will have jobs at the end of their study."

4.1 Characteristics of Parents Interviewed in 1997

Parent interviewed	Name of parent	Country of birth	Date of arrival	Language of Interview	Family structure	Children [no. & gender]
Mother	Mulki	Somalia	1994	Somali	Single mother	3 2 Girls & 1 Boy
Mother	Muhibo	Somalia	01.01.95	Somali	Single mother	6 4 Girls & 2 Boys
Mother	Amino	Somalia	End of 1993	Somali	Single mother	3 1 Girls & 2 Boys
Mother	Halimo-Sa'diyo	Somalia	End of 1993	Somali	Single mother	4 2 Girls & 2 boys
Father	Muumin	Ethiopia/ Somalia	24.09.90	Somali	Intact Both parents present	3 2 Girls & 1 Boy
Mother	Awralo	Somalia	07.09.89	Somali	Single mother	2 Girls
Mother	Daruuro	Somalia	Nov. 90	Somali	Single mother	2 Boys
Father	Hussein	Somalia	1993	Somali	Intact Both parents present	9 2 Girls & 7 Boys
Father	Abdi	Somalia	1989	Somali	Intact Both parents present	5 4 Girls & 1 Boy

Father	Mohamed	Somalia	1990	Somali	Intact Both parents present	8 6 Girls & 2 Boys
Total: 10 6 Mothers 4 Fathers	-	All were born in Somalia	All arrived between 1989 to 1995	All were interviewed in Somali	6 single mothers, & 4 intact families	45 Dependent children.

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

4.2 Characteristics of Parents Interviewed in 2008/2009

Parent interviewed	Country of birth	Date of arrival	Language of Interview	Family structure In 2008/9	Children [no & gender in 1997]	Additional children since 1997
Mulki (Mother)	Somalia	1994	Somali	Single mother	3 2 Girls & 1 Boy	0
Muhibo (Mother) & Mohyadin (Father)	Somalia	01.01.95	Somali	Intact Both parents present	6 4 Girls & 2 Boys	0
Amino (Mother) & Mattan (Father)	Somalia	End of 1993	Somali	Intact Both parents present	3 1 Girls & 2 Boys	0
Halimo-Sa'diyo (Mother)	Somalia	End of 1993	Somali	Single mother	4 2 Girls & 2 boys	0

Muumin (Father)	Ethiopia/ Somalia	24.09.90	Somali	Intact Both parents present	3 2 Girls & 1 Boy	0
Awralo (Mother)	Somalia	07.09.89	Somali	Single mother	2 Girls	0
Daruuro (Mother)	Somalia	Nov. 90	Somali	Single mother	2 Boys	0
Hussein (Father)	Somalia	1993	English	Intact Both parents present	9 2 Girls & 7 Boys	2 1 Girl & 1 Boy
Abdi (Father) & Naima (Mother)	Somalia	1989	Somali	Intact Both parents present	5 4 Girls & 1 Boy	3 1 Girl & 2 Boys
Jimo (Mother)	Somalia	1990	Somali	Intact Both parents present	8 6 Girls & 2 Boys	1 Boy
Bilaajo (Mother) Extra Parent	Somalia	1994	Somali	Intact Both parents present	4 2 Girls & 2 Boys	1 Boy
Total: 14 8 Mothers 6 Fathers	All were born in Somalia	All arrived between 1989 to 1995	1 parent spoke English; the rest were Interviewed in Somali	4 single mothers, & 7 intact families	45* Dependent children in 1997	7 Children since 1997

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- The parent coloured in yellow is an extra parent
- * This is the total dependant children for the original parent interviewees in 1997, and hence excludes extra parent (Bilaajo, coloured in yellow).
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

Part III: Analysis & Discourses

CHAPTER V

SOMALI YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE TRAJECTORIES INTO ADULTHOOD

PART I

Chapters 5, 6, & 7 present thematic analysis of the interview data from all the young people who took part in the project. I follow Alan Bryman's (2008:700) definition of thematic analysis as 'a term used in connection with the analysis of qualitative data to refer to the extraction of key themes'. The early findings, as reported in young people's stories in the appendix, present 25 individual case histories based on a detailed account of the facts or events in the life of each of these young people. The outcomes reported in these chapters pertain to the hard realities of early adult life experienced by the group as a whole. These range from actual educational achievement and occupational status to unemployment, incarceration, and even repatriation (voluntary or involuntary) to Somalia.

Outlined below are the key themes drawn from the interviews with young people. There are eight themes altogether, spread over three chapters (5, 6, & 7). The first three items will be addressed in this chapter. The remaining five themes and the conclusion will be dealt with in the next two chapters. Let us first begin with a discussion of the key characteristics of my research participants.

Table 5.1 Key characteristics of young people interviewed in 2008/2009

Name & Gender of Young Person	Country of Birth	Age at Arrival	Age in 2008/9	Marital status/ Own children	Living situation	Education/ Employment Status in 2008/9
Su'ad (f)	Somalia	6 yrs	21 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Samiya (f)	Somalia	6 yrs	21 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Fahmo (f)	Somalia	8 yrs	21 yrs	Single	Living with parents	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
Said (m)	Somalia	6 yrs	21 yrs	Single	Living with parents	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
Iftin (f)	Somalia	4 yrs	19 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Nafiso (f)	Somalia	11 yrs	26 yrs	Married with a daughter	Has her own family	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
Dahabo (f)	Somalia	9 yrs	24 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Care Assistant + Further Education
Mahad (m)	Somalia	7 yrs	22 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education + p/t Job
Rahman (m)	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	Single	Living with parents	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]

Farhan (m)	Somalia	10 yrs	25 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Community Organizer + Trainee Legal Adviser
Nawal (f)	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Weris (f)	Somalia	7 yrs	23 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education as Trainee Nurse
Alas (m)	Somalia	7 yrs	25 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Has a job as a driver + works @ Family Poundshop
Zaki (m)	Somalia	10 yrs	23 yrs	Married & wife is expecting 1 st child	Living @ wife's parents	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
Kassim (m)	Somalia	8 yrs	21 yrs	Married with 3 children	Living in Somalia	Farmer in Somalia
Fardosa (f)	Somalia	7 yrs	20 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education as Trainee Nurse
Suuban (f)	Somalia	12 yrs	28 yrs	Single	Living @ her own place	Student in Higher Education as Trainee Nurse
Jamal (m)	Somalia	11 yrs	27 yrs	Married & wife is expecting 1 st child	Has his own family	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
Deeqa (f)	Somalia	12 yrs	27 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Editorial Assistant with a Publishing Company
Habboon (f)	Somalia	11 yrs	26 yrs	Single	Living @ her own place	Solicitor with a London Law Firm
Adil (m)	Somalia	10 yrs	25 yrs	Single	Living with	Student in Higher Education

					parents	
Zahra (f)	Somalia	9 yrs	24 yrs	Married	Has her own family	Hospital Nurse (RN)
Guure (m)	Germany	1 yr	20 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Maandeeq (f)	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	Single	Living with parents	Student in Higher Education
Dr. Guuleed, (m), EXYP	Somalia	9 yrs	27 yrs	Married & wife is expecting 1 st child	Has his own family	Hospital Registrar
Jidhaan, (m), EXYP	Somalia	9 yrs	25 yrs	Single	Living with friends	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- EXYP means Extra Young Person. There were three extra young people interviewed for the project: 2 males, and a female. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because among the children of my original parent interviewees, the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

Key characteristics; family and neighbourhood origins

To appreciate how the young men and women who took part in the study make the transition to adulthood, I begin with an idea of who they are and where they started. Table 5.1 above shows how they are distributed by gender, age-at-arrival, current chronological ages, marital status, living situation, and their education/employment status in 2008/9. All the young people in the study, except one – Guure, were born in Somalia and arrived as children between the ages of four and twelve. Guure was born in Germany and came to the UK with his family at the age of three. There are fourteen females to twelve males in the sample, reflecting both the actual

prevalence of females in the Somali community (see, for instance, Kyambi 2005:89; IPPR 2007:14),²⁰ and the difficulty of interviewing young males.²¹ At the time of interviews, the ages of these young men and women ranged from 19 to 28, and 23 was their median age.

Most (N= 20) were unmarried. Of the 20 singles, there were more women (12) than men (8). The ratio of unmarried women to unmarried men was 3 to 2. Thus males outnumbered females about 2:1 at those who were married. The six married respondents comprised of four men and two women. One of the married males, Kassim, lives in Somalia with his wife and children (see Kassim's story). Kassim's brother, Zaki (21), is also married and lives with the family of his wife in the same area that he grew up. They were expecting their first child at the time of my last interview with him. The remaining four married members of the sample have all moved out of their parents' and live with their spouses as families. All, except one young woman who moved to a city in the Midlands where she and her husband both work, still live near their parents and other relatives in neighbourhoods where the family has lived for many years.

The majority of participants (N= 17, comprising 10 females and 7 males) continued to live at home. If we add Zaki who is living with his wife at her parents' place, then the number is 18 young men and women still living at home with their families. When asked why they're still living at home, many of these young people stressed their strong connection to their families, and their 'sense of obligation to support them' (compare Fuligni 2001; Fuligni & Pedersen 2002; Fuligni & Tseng 2008). Nearly all of them mentioned that they were financially supporting their families in the UK, and that they were also sending remittances to relatives in Somalia. Of course, the high cost of housing in London also presents a major challenge to young people trying to leave the parental home. Several respondents have acknowledged starting a separate household would be quite expensive, and that staying at home with parents or relatives was the easiest way to cut costs (compare Kasinitz et al., 2008).

Some young people said they had hoped to be able to move out of their parents' in a few years time when they have completed their higher education and had a job. That moving out also will mark the point in their lives, they say, when they were likely to form a family of their own. But the experience of Farhan (male, 25) may not enchant them. He moved away to study and returned to the family home after the completion of his university education because he couldn't secure a job, and hence had no money to support himself. He works as a community organizer now at his father's organization and also trains as a legal adviser. He hopes to save some money in the next few years so that he will be able to buy his own place when he moves out of his parents' home.

Girls, in particular, have emphasized religious and cultural expectations on them to stay at their parents' until they get married and have their own family. Weris's statement is typical of the reasons some of the girls gave for staying in the family home: "I live at home with my mum ... This is always been important religion-wise, culture-wise. My religion, my culture demands young girls to stay at their parents' until such time that they get married and have their own family. But I am also a help to my mum." Other girls said they 'feel safe' at home with their parents. Some responses (from both male and female) reflected concerns that, in the absence of family support, moving away from home carried risks, such as diverting attention from educational goals and/or religious commitments (compare Cassidy et al., 2006).

Two unmarried females (Suuban & Habboon) were living apart from their families for work and study purposes. Habboon had to move 'because it was too far too travel to work ... and the job was very demanding'. She didn't have a car so she couldn't drive to work. She also started a part-time course which added to the pressures of her work. But Habboon also had this to say: "... it is quite important to live alone, to have that bit of independence and freedom." Suuban had only moved a short distance from

her parents to concentrate on her busy study/work schedule which also involved her working during the night. One single male, Jidhaan, was living with friends because he doesn't have a place of his own to stay. He is the only person in the group who was raised in a care home. He left his foster parents at the age of 19. He is now 25, has no job and lives 'with friends' (See Jidhaan's story, Appendix B).

The characteristic 'age of arrival' in Table 5.1 has significant consequences for the adaptation process of the second generation (Hirschman 2001:320).²² The idea here is that if children arrive at a very young age of say 7 or less, they would be fully exposed to their host society's educational system, and would presumably take advantage of it heart and soul. The table reveals that 12 out of the 26 young people interviewed arrived quite young at age 7 or below. The remaining 14 arrived at an older age of between 7 to 12. The mean age-at-arrival of all 26 participants was 8 years. The younger group would have had little memory of living anywhere else, and also none of them would have begun their schooling in Somalia because the school system was completely destroyed by then. The older group may have had experienced some significant part of their childhood socialization in Somalia. Those who started school back home have fond memories of their childhoods. Here is Dr. Guuleed:

"Life was very different. Back home in Somalia we lived in a big house. My mum, my dad, and my family were all there for me when I went to primary school in there. Everyone in the family was around. I'd play football with my friends because you know everything and you know everyone. I could say we had a good life in there, and when the war came that is all gone."

The children of Mohamed Abdulle Ga'al (Deeqa, Habboon, Adil, & Zahra) are another group of young people who arrived between ages 9 to 12. For them, their childhood memories relate to outside Somalia. As the wars erupted, they first went to Germany where they stayed for three years before moving over to the UK.

Not shown in the table is the children's pre-arrival educational background. Most of these young people arrived from a war-torn country with little or no schooling. Many of them have missed critical years of classroom experience and often could not even read or write in their own language, let alone English (see Mehmedbegovic 2007:227). The children of Mohamed Ga'al were the exception. They were sent to school in Germany, and arrived in London highly literate and with well-developed study skills. Such varied experiences and backgrounds have profound implications for their transition in the UK setting (compare Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet 2004).

I now briefly review the varied family circumstances and neighbourhood settings in which the young people grew up, and discuss how these settings and circumstances affected their lives. The family has an enormous impact on one's formative years and often provides important resources later in life (Kasinitz et al., 2008:94). Table 5.2 below shows details about the young people's family and neighbourhood origins in terms of family structure, size, and movement; where they grew up, where they now live, and their parents' educational background.

The most important question here is how many of the young people grew up with both parents, and how many of them were raised by single parents. The literature on the subject regards 'family background as the principal source of achievement differences' (Coleman 1988; Conley & Albright 2004), and family structure (e.g., single vs. intact) as a pertinent indicator of social capital (Entwisle & Alexander 1995; Powell et al., 2004; Amato 2005). The children of single parents, according to this view, are more likely to do badly at school and have more problems as they grow up than those of two-parent families (Whelan 1994; McLanahan & Sandefur 1994; Mooney, Oliver & Smith 2009). In contrast, by their very character two-parent families double the scope of available resources to guide and influence the adaptation of their children (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:251).

Table 5.2 shows that 17 out of the 26 respondents grew up in intact families, i.e., with both parents - twice as many as those who grew up in single parent-headed households. Just under a third of the total or 8 people grew up in the latter.²³ There is also the evidence (not shown on the table) of young people growing up in households which, to all intent and purposes, were female-headed because the father was absent most of the time. In at least two cases, fathers returned to Somalia or went abroad to work because they couldn't get a job in the UK. In other cases, the vagaries of immigration often split families resulting in so-called family migration waves, or serial migration as it is also known. For about one half of the families in this study, immigration was not a one-time event but a succession of events. Family members arrived in at least two different waves. In one particular case, the case of Awralo (a single mother who raised 3 daughters), family members arrived in three waves: mother and some of the children arrived 7th September 1989; her daughter Weris arrived on Dec 16, 1992; and the father (who is now separated from her) arrived in 1995.

In the majority of families with serial migration, however, the first wave was the male head of the household who first immigrated and established himself, sending money back to support the family. The second phase often included wife and children, and possibly dependent close relatives (compare Waters 1999). All the males/fathers in my sample have used exactly this method to bring their wives and children into the UK. In one case, the family of Abdi, the children of his previous marriage were left behind not with their biological mother but with their grandparents who looked after them under extremely difficult circumstances of war in Somalia. They eventually arrived in the UK with their step-mother, step-brothers and sisters.

Apart from Awralo above, there were 5 other families in the original sample of 1997 who lived in female-headed households. It appears these single mothers arrived with their children as a family unit directly from Somalia. Two of these women (Amino & Muhibo) have succeeded to bring their

husbands into the UK through family reunification processes in 1998 and 1999, respectively. As regards the others, it is not clear whether or not the children in those households have ever lived with their fathers. But even if they did, as the cases of the two women above indicate, it is clear these families were split up for some period of time because of the migration process. When they are reunited after a long separation, parents and children encounter one another as strangers (see Waters 1999:207). This can cause some problems between the generations when parents try to establish firm discipline over children they have spent very little time with or may have not even seen over many years (ibid., p.205-6). Such a family situation could become a major source of tension and stress in the lives of young people.

Although I interviewed young people from 13 different families, I only have data for family size from 11 families. Family size, of course, is an important structure that has an influence on family well-being including children's education. The average number of children in the 11 families was five, 2½ times more than the average number of children in a family in the UK which stood at 1.8 in 2007 (see The UK family: In statistics. @ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7071611.stm>; and also <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1163>). Married couple families were generally larger in my sample with an average 6.1 children compared to 3 in lone-mother families.

This finding is consistent with what is already known about the Somali community in the UK where families tended to be quite large with an average of three to four children per family (see Carey-Wood et al., 1995; Cole & Robinson 2003). Many Somali households, according to Cole and Robinson (2003:iv), were living in severely overcrowded circumstances which had a dramatic impact on their physical, mental and emotional well-being and future prospects. Young people living in these households complained about problems completing homework and studying for exams in overcrowded conditions (ibid., p. iv). In the wider literature, the inverse

relationship between the number of siblings and educational progress has been one of the most robust patterns reported (Powell, Werum & Steelman 2004: 113). It may seem counterintuitive that the most successful individuals among the group so far are young people from the second largest family in the study with a total of 9 children, comprising 5 girls and 4 boys.

The issue of family mobility has also been tabulated. Eight out of 11 families have moved since 1997. Five families moved at least once; two moved twice; and Hussein's family moved more than 4 times, the last one in the middle of 2009. Ten families live in permanent accommodation as per the time of our interviews in 2008/9, whereas Hussein's family, presumably because of its large size (8 children + 2 parents), still remains in temporary accommodation. This despite the fact that the two oldest boys (Kassim 21, & Zaki 23) no longer live at home. According to the father, the family always lived in severely overcrowded circumstances. Problems with living in temporary accommodation, according to Cole & Robinson (2003:iv), included isolation from other Somali households, its unsuitability to cultural and social norms and the dearth of appropriate move-on accommodation.

The neighbourhood origins of the sample, as set out in Table 5.2, are as follows: 6 young people grew up in the London Borough of Merton; 13 grew up in Haringey; 5 participants from one family grew up in Harrow; and we have one young person growing up in each of these two areas: Hackney, and Newham. All the participants, except Zahra (f, 24) who moved to a city in the Midlands for work and family purposes and Kassim (m, 21) who was sent to Somalia some years ago and has a family there, still live in or around the areas they grew up.

Although I have not asked the young people to describe their neighbourhoods, there are poignant descriptions of problems (i.e., drug dealing, gangs, violence, young people engaged in street life, playing truant, etc.,) contained in some of their life stories or those of their parents. The odds of failure and adoption of dysfunctional lifestyles are greater for

children who grew up in such environments (see Elliott et al., 2006:2). At the household level, according to Harrison and Phillips (2010:28), evidence suggests that housing conditions of new migrants are often poor, that they often experience racist harassment in the deprived neighbourhoods in which they settle (or to which they are allocated by local authorities), and that they occupy a relatively weak marginal position when competing for decent affordable accommodation. The neighborhood characteristics outlined here are reflected in the schools attended by a large segment of Somali young people (compare Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet 2004).

Lupton and Sullivan (2007) have put forward the notion of the 'London context' which I think is pertinent to the "neighbourhood effects" (Kasinitz et al., 2008:95) experienced by my study group. London has become a city increasingly enmeshed in diversity and inequality. According to the census in 2001, 40 per cent of London's population (and 50 per cent of inner London's) was from an ethnic group other than White British, the main groups being 'other white', Indian, black African and black Caribbean. There were over 2 million Londoners from 175 countries (GLA 2005), including refugees and asylum seekers estimated at between 350,000 and 400,000 or about one in 20 of the city's resident population (GLA 2001). 360 home languages were spoken in London schools (Baker & Eversley 2000, all cited by Lupton & Sullivan 2007:11).

But also London is an unequal city plagued by economic, social, and geographic divisions (ibid., p. 16). The latter pertains to the spatial distribution of ethnic groups that plays a key role in the spatial distribution of worklessness, poverty, and exclusion (ibid., p. 20). In this view, underlying all the patterns of school provision and achievement is an undercurrent of racial and ethnic inequalities, and these divisions are directly experienced by London's children (ibid., p. 19).

According to Lupton and Sullivan (2007:16), eligibility for free school meals (FSM) serves as one indicator of child poverty, with school students eligible

for free school meals if their parents are claiming income support or other low income state benefits. While they caution about the use of FSM in making comparisons between the performance of schools with high FSM in London and elsewhere, they say that FSM levels can help us to understand the patterning of poverty across London (ibid., p. 17). Thus using their table one can see that, of the 5 London boroughs where members of our sample grew up, the highest proportion of FSM pupils were found in Newham (43 per cent) followed by Hackney (39 per cent) and Haringey (37 per cent). Merton where the children of 5 of our 12 families grew up had the least FSM pupils at 14 per cent, followed upwardly by Harrow at 17 per cent. We had one of our biggest families in Harrow, 5 of whose children took part in the research. Just for comparative purposes, the highest proportion of London's FSM pupils were found in Tower Hamlets (64 per cent) followed by Southwark (45 per cent) (ibid., p. 17).

This is 'the London context' in which the research participants grew up. Any understanding of these young people must therefore take account of the meanings they attach to these patterns, and how they see their position in the larger society. It is how they come to define themselves as well as how others define them that has important implications for where they live, with whom they live, where they work, and how they envision their future and mobilize towards the realization of *their goals* (my italics) (see Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet 2004:427). And it is to these, issues of identity formation, which I shall now turn to.

Table 5.2 Young people's family and neighbourhood origins

Name & Gender of Young Person	Family of origin structure	No. & Gender of children	Family moved since 1997/Type of Accom.	Grew up in the area of	Now living in the area of	Parental level of Education
Su'ad (f)	Single Parent Household	3 Children 2 girls & 1 boy	No [in Perman-ent Accom.]	South London	South London	University or College education

Samiya (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	South London	South London	Same as above
Fahmo (f)	Intact Both Parents Present	6 4 Girls & 2 Boys	No [in Permanent Accom.]	South London	South London	No University or College education
Said (m)	Intact Both Parents Present	3 1 Girl & 2 Boys	No [in Permanent Accom.]	South London	South London	No University or College education
Iftin (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	South London	South London	Same as above
Nafiso (f)	Single Parent Household	4 2 Girls & 2 Boys	Once [in Permanent Accom.]	North London	North London	No University or College education
Dahabo (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Mahad (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Rahman (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Farhan (m)	Intact Both Parents Present	3 2 Girls & 1 Boys	Once [in Permanent Accom.]	North London	North London	University or College education
Nawal (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Weris (f)	Single Parent Household	3 3 Girls	Once [in Permanent Accom.]	North London	North London	No University or College education
Alas (m)	Single Parent Household	2 2 boys	Once [in Permanent Accom.]	North London	North London	No University or College education
Zaki (m)	Intact Both Parents Present	10 3 Girls & 7 Boys	4 + [in temporary Accom.]	North London	North London	University or College education
Kassim (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	Somalia	Same as above
Fardosa (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Suuban (f)	Intact Both Parents Present	8 4 Girls & 4 Boys	Twice [in Permanent Accom.]	North London	North London	University or College education
Jamal (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	North London	North London	Same as above
Deeqa (f)	Intact Both Parents	9 5 Girls & 4 Boys	Twice [in Permanent Accom.]	West London	West London	University or College education

	Present					
Habboon (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	West London	North London	Same as above
Adil (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	West London	West London	Same as above
Zahra (f)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	West London	West London	Same as above
Guure (m)	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	West London	West London	Same as above
Maandeeq (f)	Intact Both Parents Present	4 2 Girls & 2 Boys	Once [in Perman-ent Accom.]	South London	South London	University or College education
Dr. Guuleed (m), EXYP	Intact Both Parents Present	Unknown	Unknown	East London	East London	University or College education
Jidhaan (m) EXYP	Grew up In care with foster parents	Unknown	Unknown	North London	North London	Unknown

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- EXYP means Extra Young Person. There were three extra young people interviewed for the project: 2 males, and a female. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because among children of the original parent interviewees, the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

Ethnic, racial and religious identities

Herbert Gans (2007:98) defines identity in the 'literal sense – as the perceptions that people construct about and for themselves and others'. In a broad sense, according to Gans, identity is just a new term to cover mainstream research into ethnic and racial structures and cultures, perhaps a replacement for ethnic or racial status (ibid., p. 98).

The theory of segmented assimilation argues that racial discrimination will lead young nonwhite immigrants to a reactive ethnic identification with native minorities and a rejection of mainstream values (Portes & Zhou & 1993; Portes 1995, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Concern about these questions has led many scholars to ask whether the children of nonwhite immigrants are in danger of becoming a new, permanent, excluded

underclass, worse off than their immigrant parents, who at least find some solace and dignity in the racial and ethnic hierarchies of their homelands (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2004: 281).

In Britain, according to Modood (2005a:286), ethnic assertiveness arises from perceptions of not being respected and lacking access to public space. It consists of counterposing “positive” images against traditional or dominant stereotypes. By projecting identities in order to challenge racism and existing power relations, the politics of ethnic identity seeks not just toleration for ethnic difference, but also public acknowledgement, resources, and representation (*ibid.*, p. 286). Modood goes on to say that the key political identity in Britain has been a Black identity, derived from and paralleling the Black pride and Black power discourses in the United States. In the British context, however, the political project encompassed within the ‘Black identity’ not just those of African descent, but all non-Whites including South Asians. This unified identity achieved a temporary and fragile hegemony in the 1980s, according to Modood, but is simply one feature of a plurality of non-white public identities which now noticeably includes a Muslim identity. The latter tends to eclipse more specific ethnic identities, in part because of the domestic and transnational political crises and conflicts which have pushed Muslims and Islam into the public spotlight (*ibid.*, p. 286).

The participants in this research were asked (in an open-ended question) to indicate how they identified themselves. From the variety of responses given, an overwhelming majority (19 out of 26 individuals) adopted a pan-ethnic ‘Black/African’ and/or religious identity (i.e., Black British, Black African British, Black African Somali, Black Somali British, Muslim Somalian British, Muslim Somali, Young Black Muslim Woman, etc.). Only 6 respondents embraced national-origin (Somali) identity. One young woman identified herself simply as Muslim. All, except one, of those who adopted a religious identity (hyphenated or unhyphenated) were females. A young man who was the only one to be born outside Somalia (Guure, 20) was the only

male to adopt a religious identity, saying: "Obviously, I'd first identify myself as a Muslim. I'd also probably say I am a Somalian, even though I've never been there. It is who I am."

There were 5 males and one female who felt and proclaimed a Somali national identity. They include Kassim (m, 21) who lives as a farmer with his family in Somalia. They also include Jidhaan (m, 25) who was raised by foster carers. All 6 respondents, except Jidhaan, were returned to Somalia at one time or another by their parents, and some still maintained various kinds of ties to their homeland (see Transnationalism, in chap. 7).

According to Stepick and Stepick (2003:141), the identity of immigrant youth seems to evolve: from homeland nationalism upon arrival, to shame of the homeland, and after about ten years in the United States (read for host country), to renewed pride in the homeland. In general, according to these researchers, as the children of immigrants mature, they become increasingly likely to adopt a hyphenated label (*ibid.*, p. 141). Various other researchers agree, reporting 'shifts in self-identity labels' among the children of immigrants (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Kasinitz et al., 2008).

An important limitation of the original study was that information on the children was obtained indirectly from the parents. This meant that I did not gauge the self-identification descriptions of these young people as they were growing up to be able to register now any shifts in their identity labels. The parents who I interviewed in 1997 all identified themselves as Somalis; had a clearly defined 'home country - Somalia' and expressed a strong desire to maintain their culture and language. When I re-interviewed them twelve years on, their self-identities have substantially remained the same as before.

In contrast, most of the young people embraced a pan-ethnic racial identity such as black or African as opposed to national origin identity – Somali.

Prejudice against newcomer immigrants compelled some of them to assume the behaviour and appearance of their local adolescent counterparts. One young woman (Weris, 23) eschewed her Somali identity because she was confronted with bullying and discrimination at school. Here is what she had to say: "I, as an individual, was told a number of times that I wasn't a black person because of the 'Black Pride' I don't know even though my skin colour was darker than a lot of them. My features are softer or something; or the fact that Somalis are not considered as black people. ... We may not have been through a lot of stuff like the things that affected the black Americans, but then again people from Africa, Nigerians and Ghanians, were saying to me that I am not black 'cause I haven't been through that as well. ... I got abused for being Somali so I tended to have something against them as well. Because of 'you' people are saying bad stuff about me so I thought 'oh, Somali people are bad' and I didn't particularly like them which meant I didn't particularly like myself" (Weris, 23).

Weris was sent back to Somalia (see Weris' story, Appendix A) where she spent a few years. Upon her return to London, she became not only more willing to acknowledge her national origins but she took pride in them: "I've got to appreciate the Somali people. After I've gone back to Somalia and came back an older woman or an older person, I have been able to have Somali friends. ... I found that my Somali friends are a lot closer to me because my mother accepts them. ... I believe we (the Somali people) are a generous giving culture and traditionally welcome people, especially our own, bring our own closer. So that is how I have been able to really have my own Somali friends closer. I still have my other friends, and some of them are also close to me. But when it comes down to this contact, family contact, where me and my Somali friends will go out and tell people that we're cousins; I wouldn't exactly do that with my white friend Lisa."

But these other friends' role in her life has equally been pivotal. As well as being non-judgemental, Weris says, they're a help to her. For instance, she could confide in them (non-Somali friends) more, especially if she did not

wish to have the information passed on to anyone else including her own family. There are secrets not to be told to others, she says, which she could trust with her non-Somali friends: "... I believe that I could tell my other ethnic (non-Somali) friends a lot more stuff. Like, for instance, I can confide secrets in them. Sometimes I can't do that with my Somali friends not only because I knew these other friends much longer, and also you can't tell everything to people you've just met. But also I believe that if you can keep a secret box in another land no one will get to it but if you keep it close to home, someone is bound to open. There is that mentality and there is also another mentality which is that they are nonjudgmental. My other friends are nonjudgmental. I am not saying that my Somali friends are either, but it is just that you assume that because they're so close that they might become like your sister. You have a tit for tat with your sister, she is going to let slip."

Other young people were also bullied or even attacked, but not forced like Weris to abandon their heritage. Jidhaan (25), a streetwise young man whose survival instinct in a difficult, often dangerous urban environment in North London is legendary, puts it down to pure demographics and the fact that they returned the violence in kind. He says there are now more young Somali males in the streets where they used to get bullied upon arrival in the UK back in the 1990s. They're now respected, he says, because they went after their tormentors and got even with them, albeit violently: "I remember a time when anyone who sees me in the street, black or white, would go after me simply because I am Somali. The black boys would set about young Somali people. Nobody knew where we came from, Europe or Africa. So we had to introduce ourselves to the world, hit back and beat these people, including the blacks. Now we are respected by the blacks here in North London more than anywhere else in London. In other areas of London, you (as a Somali young person) will be robbed by other groups. But in here, north London, you will not be because of what the Somalis did in here. Many black and Turkish people were attacked, and some of them even knifed, by Somali boys so they know that we can fight them and that is why

they respect us. We are doing this so that we can all live in peace. We have a saying in Somali: 'you make war to get peace'."

In other cases, individual merit enabled a positive transformation of relationships and attitudes with people from other groups. Here is a 25-year-old young Somali man, a relative of one of my participants, who works in the Civil Service in a predominantly Somali-populated area of North West London talking about how his friends perceive the Somali community now as compared to when he was in school about 10 years or so ago: "At school, kids would just call us names "Mali, Smelly, Blah Blah Blah and what have you". They were really bad, and would abuse us in such a nasty language. But that was then. I now have friends of every colour and creed: White, Black African, Jamaican, Asian, Turkish, Jewish, you name it. These friends of mine all tell me how they'd all love to marry a Somali girl. Even my female friends say the Somali girls are the most attractive in town. They all appreciate my role and contribution in the business, and have huge respect for myself, my family and my community". In essence, the identities of these young people cannot be understood apart from the situations in which they find themselves.

Religiosity is another recurring theme in the social lives of many of these young people. Asked if religion plays a role in their lives and if so what would that be, most of the young people said that they and their families were deeply religious and that they draw important support from their faith. This was a typical answer: "Yes, religion is very important for me ... I wake up early in the morning to pray. I also pray at school. I wear headscarf. I try to incorporate my religion in everyday life because it is important" (Su'ad, f, 21).

For immigrants, according to Portes & Rumbaut (2006:315), religion takes on different meanings and roles across the generations. While fostering transnational ties may be important for first generation migrants, for their children, issues and concerns tied to their present lives become paramount.

In my sample, girls were more inclined to converse about the whole notion of religion than boys. They talked about the wearing of the headscarf as a religious symbol, and some of them also used religion for identity purposes (i.e., identified themselves as Muslim).

Boys, on the other hand, talked about religion in terms of achieving solidarity with co-religionists. They talked about going to mosques, Friday prayers, and meeting friends in these gatherings. According to Portes & Rumbaut (2006:316), when second-generation children continue observing the faith of their parents, certain benefits associated with selective acculturation become apparent. There is a common universe of meanings shared across generations, more open channels of communication between the two generations, and a system of beliefs and norms antithetical to downward assimilation (*ibid.*, p. 316). The evidence throughout the pages of this thesis testifies to the truth of this statement.

Consistent with the literature on societal gender roles, there were different expectations between the girls and boys in their identity construction (see Butterfield 2004; Warikoo 2004). Whereas the young men in the study discussed their identity in terms of racial solidarity in the face of societal exclusion and minority status, some of the women revealed their struggle for independence from their patriarchal family traditions. Here is Samiya (f, 21) demanding that her community embrace the idea that household chores be shared equally between both sexes: “It is not only the family structure that is different in Somali families. You could have loads of brothers and sisters and can still do your work at home. It is because the females all have to play up to the females’ role in the house which is doing almost everything to do with domestic chores whereas the males have an attitude of ‘I can go out any time I want, I can come back anytime I want’. And I am lucky enough to say that I don’t have that in my house.”

Su’ad (f, 21), Samiya’s twin sister, was even more blunt when she commented about what she sees are the major inequalities between Somali

men and women. She talked of women being put in submissive roles at home by the community, and not raised to be independent individuals. She says she does not want to be dictated to by tradition like the older generation females, and that she'd want to live as an independent woman: "I think the problem facing Somali young women is the attitude in the community saying that you're either in education or you get married and have a family. If you don't do either, then you're a bad person. And when you get education and grow a bit older to 24 or 25, 24 is not even old but to them (the community) it is old, then they say "oh, blah! Blah! So and so: your daughter is not married? (too old to not have married by now). My daughter has 16 children". Laughter ... That is what Somali people are like, and you can't seem to win. But it is better to do what you want to do as opposed to what other people think. ... If I were to have a child and to get married, do I wanna end up in a Council house? I live in a Council house at the moment. Loads of people think it is sort of offensive if I say I don't wanna become like my mum. Well, my mum had a job before coming here. She had a stable position in society (back in Somalia) but she had to leave because of war. It is not her fault. I don't wanna be like 'ooh, she grew up in England but she lives in a Council house', you know. I wanna do better for myself. If I am gonna have children and if I am gonna get married, I don't wanna be financially in a bad place later on. It is very normal for a Somali woman just to marry men, raise their children on benefits (as) their husbands go to work. I don't think that is the worst vice but I don't want that on me, personally."

Past research indicates that youths see and compare themselves with those around them, based on their social similarity or dissimilarity with the reference groups that most directly affect their experiences—especially with regard to such socially visible and categorized markers as gender, phenotype, language, and nationality (Tajfel, 1981; cited by Portes & Rumbaut 2001:151). Young people in this research overwhelmingly reported their race as black or adopted a pan-ethnic black identity. Here is Weris, a young trainee nurse aged 23, identifying

herself: "I have since decided that I am black ... So I do consider myself as a young black woman, and if I were to be asked further than that, then I would be a young black Muslim woman, and then after that I would consider adding the Somali part". Another female trainee nurse (aged 28) described herself in this way: "British of Somali origin, Black British, Muslim female 'health medic' Somali British (depending on the context)". A young man (aged 25) identified himself as "Black African, British national ethnically and originally Somali". Still another young man (aged 22) said that he would identify himself as "Strong African from Somalia". Such self-definitions, it has been suggested, carry affective meaning, implying a psychological bond with others that tends to serve psychologically protective functions (*ibid.*, p.151).

I am aware of an alternative position argued by Valentine, Sporton and Nielson (2008) in their research on Somali young people's identities in the city of Sheffield. Among their findings, they claim the following: (a) Young Somalis are wary of claiming a British identity because 'British' is implicitly still imagined as a white identity. Several acknowledged that a British identity can only be claimed at particular times and places to particular audiences. (b) The majority disavowed the identity 'black' in defining their relationship to white majority communities although it became apparent from their accounts that their identities were read as such by others (See also Sporton & Valentine 2007; Sporton, Valentine & Nielsen 2006).

Whilst I accept that there is a vast contextual, conceptual and methodological difference between their study and mine,²⁴ I'll just make a few comments about the two points above. The second part of Valentine et al.'s first argument is not, in fact, much of a deviation from what I said above. Many of the young people I interviewed said they would identify themselves depending on the context. At least two of them were also hesitant to call themselves British, in my view, for different reasons. One of them, Zaki (m, 23), was giving his reasoning for identifying himself as 'Black African British' when he said: "I am not fully British, of course". His sister,

Fardosa (f, 20), identified herself as Black African and said thus: "... I wouldn't call myself British because that is not who I am. I am African who has come to Britain."

But most of the young people in this study used a hyphenated British identity and, unlike Valentine et al.'s respondents, did not seem to consider British as 'implicitly White identity' which they could not use. Among the hyphenated British labels they used include the following: British national; British citizen; British of Somali origin; Black African British; Black Somali British; Somali British, etc. These young people moved among friends of many different backgrounds and enjoyed the diversity of London, which defined Britain for them.

The second argument by Valentine et al. has two parts to it. The first part says 'the majority of Somali young people disavowed the identity 'black' in defining their relationship to white majority communities.' Here comes the clause then, the 2nd part, which claims that '... their identities were read as such by others.' I don't know about it being 'read as such by others,' but I can say that the first part is quite dramatically at odds with my findings. As I said above, the overwhelming majority of my respondents (19 out of 26) adopted a pan-ethnic 'Black/African' and/or religious identity (i.e., Black British, Black African British, Black Somali British, Muslim Somalian British, Muslim Somali, Young Black Muslim Woman, etc.). Only 6 respondents embraced national-origin (Somali) identity.

These findings are consistent with what the literature tells us about the identity choices young immigrants make. Relative to their parents, the process of their ethnic self-identification is more complex and often entails the juggling of competing allegiances and attachments (see Portes & Rumbaut 2001:150). Situated within two cultural worlds, they must define themselves in relation to multiple reference groups and to the classifications into which they are placed by their native peers, schools, the ethnic community, and the larger society (ibid., p. 150).

Rubén Rumbaut (1996) distinguishes four types of ethnic identity choices among young second generation respondents: (1) national origin identities, (2) hyphenated identities, (3) assimilative unhyphenated identities, and (4) dissimilative racial and pan-ethnic identities. It is also suggested that the identity of immigrant youth seems to evolve. As they mature, according to Stepick & Stepic (2003:141), children of immigrants become increasingly likely to adopt a hyphenated identity label.

One thing I might add is that survey questioning (which is the mainstay of Valentine et al.'s study) does not capture the subtle contextual distinctions necessary for understanding the subjective meanings of identity. It is in the in-depth interviews that we are able to capture much more of the complexity and ambiguity that characterize ethnic identity (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:81). In my research, an open-ended question asked the participants to indicate their racial or ethnic identity. A number of them asked me to explain what the question meant. I explained to them that racial or ethnic identity meant how you view yourself, whether you are Somali, African, Black, British or "whatever". I'd first confirm that they are satisfied with my response, and then proceed to collect their views on the matter. From the evidence gathered, Modood's (2005:287) statement that 'colour as an identity became the basis of a pan-ethnic anti-racist Black identity in Britain' perfectly chimes with the views of most of my young interviewees.

Finally, as these young people navigate through host society structures to form ideas about their own individual talents and aspirations for the future (see Garcia Coll & Szalacha 2004:81), the evidence from this research is that those who are connected with support systems in the family and community succeed in maintaining a more positive academic orientation than those who are alienated from them (compare Zhou & Bankston 1998). I shall now explore the variety of school experiences encountered by these young people, and how the social contexts of

peers, school, family and community affected them in terms of their academic performance and educational outcomes.

Educational Experiences and outcomes

Respondents had mixed views about their experiences of comprehensive school education in London. Those who had a positive view of their experiences recalled how they liked school, attended regularly, and had little problem by way of discipline or other issues. They were reluctant to find fault with their old schools when asked about any negative experiences they might have had. They were often prepared, they said, to try harder to accommodate themselves to the situation as best as they could. They also say that they have not experienced discrimination, verbal or physical abuse at school. A sample of these positive views are in order:

“School was fun. It was a good experience. I met a lot of different people. I wasn’t fluent in the language when I first began school. I remember it was a bit hard to learn the language. Only thing I can remember is the language issue. People would laugh at you because you can’t pronounce couple of words properly.” Zaki, male, 23

“Friendship, learning, just belonging and having that structure everyday, seeing the same friends. Exams. Well, not really! but just having a purpose... I struggled a little bit at the beginning because of language barriers.” Deeqa, female, 27

“Getting an education which was important to me. The quality of teaching was very good. I was able to settle in very quickly because everyone was very friendly. Most of my school experiences were very positive. I never really experienced any negativity. It was also a multicultural environment so I never felt like an outsider. I felt like I was very lucky.” Adil, male, 25

“I received an education which may not have been possible in Somalia...there were support teachers who would help you out if you didn’t understand the lesson. Also, the interaction with kids your age, making friends and school trips.” Zahra, female, 24

"It was quite challenging learning a different language. ... Teachers were good and motivating. It was really very good for me for someone higher than you to show you that you can be anything you want." Maandeeq, female, 20

Other young people described schools where indiscipline and pupil violence had a serious effect on their learning. They talk about indifferent teachers who expected little of their students, and who made even scantier effort to maintain discipline. Unruly pupils made it impossible for others to learn, and fights and yobbish behaviour were not uncommon. These respondents complain that the schools they attended gave them a poorer level of preparation for their GCSE exams.

"I got bullied at school most of the time. They take the piss because I didn't speak proper English. They would say 'Somalian', and stuff like that. ... They would pinch my *Hijab* and put it in the bin. ... They would throw things, like papers and trash, at me inside the class. They'd pull out my chair as I try to sit down so that I'd fall on the floor." Fahmo, female, 22

"When I reached high school, I went to the worst school in our area. ... There weren't any teachers that you could go to who will help you. I don't know if I gained much from high school because there wasn't really much there. ... Academically speaking, my grades dropped because the standard of teaching wasn't even that good. " Iftin, female, 19

"We had distracters in class ... There was a lot of bullying, a lot of taunting, a lot of fighting, and these kids never got expelled. You could never get expelled from our school so the students that came to our school were expelled from other schools. We couldn't get expelled from our school which was really bad. Especially at that age, if something wrong happens, you need something done about it." Weris, female, 23

"I just felt like the teachers really put us down. They'd always encourage us to do less challenging classes, and they'd tell us not to think about A-level's when we could do GNVQ's. The main thing that I think was negative at school was the different levels of standards that was expected from different students. If you were a Somali student and got a D, the teacher would say 'Well done, you tried very hard and got a D', and I don't think that was very encouraging. If other English students got a B or C, they were told off and told they could do better." Habboon, female, 26

It must be said here that respondents' perceptions of school problems were not, in any way, related to their academic engagement or lack thereof. Those who attended schools where they perceived such problems come from both ends of the spectrum, students who engaged well with their learning and are progressing (or have progressed) in their education, and those who have disengaged from learning altogether.

It is perhaps instructive to note here that Habboon (female, 26) who complains that teachers in her school often held low expectations of her attainments had not responded to their comments by disengaging. She held on tenaciously and continued to thrive in her studies until she became a solicitor. Similarly Weris (female, 23), who complained about 'distracters in class' and the whole gamut of indiscipline at school, ended up training as a nurse at one of London's topmost schools of nursing and midwifery. While critical of students' bad behaviour at school, Weris, in particular, didn't mince her words when describing how the teachers' dedication and hard work had saved them from failure to learn:

"At school we had understanding teachers. ... [who] gave us a lot of time with a lot of one-to-one. They built relationships. A lot of the children took that for granted. There was the occasional teacher that was a bit off, but the majority of them tried to be good teachers. They tried their hardest and it showed. We've even had them locked out of the classroom and used all kinds of noise and stuff (to annoy the teachers); that is how unruly were the pupils. But rather than having a go at us the next day, they were just quiet that way. They'd get into tears and all kinds of stuff, but our teachers really tried to teach us. The main thing about our school were the teachers. We didn't have that many other facilities. But the quality of our teachers should have made up for it."

Running through much of the literature is a concern with the effects of teacher expectations and racial stereotyping, and the impact these may have on the opportunities, and motivations of black and ethnic minority students

in the UK (Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Gillborn & Rollock 2010). My respondents in this research did not think that schools treated them any differently than they treated other children in school.²⁵ Also none of them reported any overtly racist or discriminatory remarks from teachers. In fact, as mentioned above, several of them said their teachers expected them to work harder to learn and to succeed.

Some respondents talked about teachers assuming that they had 'no background in English' and hence placing them in what they thought was inadequate or inappropriate language support lessons. Here is Su'ad (f, 21): "In high school, I remember in an English class (when) a teacher automatically assumed that I didn't know English so she sat me down with the people that didn't know English. That might just have been perception, but I don't think that was a ... (cynical?) act on her part." Another young woman had this to say: "I found that quite a lot of the teachers weren't very encouraging at all. They took a lot of us out of important classes and put us in 'English help' lessons, which I didn't find helpful at all" (Habboon, f, 26).

A few respondents said they experienced prejudice at the hands of fellow students of both white and ethnic minority backgrounds, comments such as "oh yes, you're black; you're Somalian; you're this; you're that". Samiya (f, 21) was asked: "Do you wear that in the shower, that headscarf?" She was also called 'a Paki' by a black girl because "I am fair-skinned" she says. Her reply to the black girl was "What is wrong with a Paki anyway?" Several girls have had their *Hijabs* (headscarfs) snatched and thrown in the rubbish bin. Suuban (f, 28) who went to two different schools had this to say: "I got bullied because of my faith. It was difficult, the guy that bullied me was Indian and you'd expect him to be more understanding but he wasn't. He had a problem with my headscarf and would pull it. One day he pulled it too far and I ended up hitting him. It did get me into trouble, but that was the last time; no one ever bullied me after that."

Several of the boys have talked about inter-racial and inter-ethnic tensions and fights flaring up inside the school gates. Occasionally, they said, it would become a battle whereby tens of pupils of this or that group gang up on few Somali boys. The Somali boys would then regroup and fight back. Other times, gang fights sparked off outside the school gates. Remarkably, none of the boys in my study reported being victims of these bouts of intergroup violence at school. I shall say more about the dangers faced by these young people in their neighbourhood and in the wider society in the next chapter.

Many respondents talked about the difficulties they faced with the English language as they started school in the UK. It was difficult to start school while not understanding anything people were saying. Few had particular difficulty “overcoming the language barrier,” and described the experience as hard, tearful, and frightening. But because they all came to the UK as young children, most respondents mastered the new language quickly. Here is one female respondent:

“I struggled a little bit at the beginning because of language barriers. I felt like I was...people were speaking but I couldn’t understand them. Of course, some of the teachers had a low expectation, but they didn’t realise language is just a form of expression; it isn’t a way of knowing someone’s level of intelligence.” Deeqa, female, 27

That sentiment was also echoed by a male respondent:

“When I went to school, I found it difficult to learn because English is not my language. Somali children – their first language is Somali, and they learn English at school. At home, there is no one who can help them with homework. The mother can’t help because she doesn’t have English.” Jidhaan, male, 25

Most young people reported that their parents stressed that they would have to work harder than other groups to get ahead. They all mentioned the

supportive role of their families and their belief that effort and persistence were the keys to school success, and to their continued efforts to succeed in their adult life. Many of them recalled how their fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters helped them with homework. With a lot of the young people, parents checked everyday to see if all homework had been completed. 21 out of 26 respondents (or 81% of study participants) representing 10 out of 13 families reported that they were either assisted with their homework by a parent or were provided with private tuition to help with their school subjects.

After finishing school, most respondents went to college and had completed two or more years of post-compulsory education. They often (but not always) chose courses at institutions closest to their parents' homes so as to limit costs. Many had achieved good academic results that would allow them to gain entry to demanding degree courses at both new and old universities across London and the Southeast. A few have gained professional degrees from elite universities. But routes through HE were often protracted with some young people going to FE in order to qualify for entry to a programme of advanced study, while others progressed from one course to another or spent a period of time in the labour market before beginning HE (compare Furlong & Cartmel 2005).

"I went to college to study science. I started at a low level [because] although I knew science I had language difficulties. Whilst studying foundation/intermediate science I also took GCSE English and progressed from there. I spent about 4 years in college to get the right qualifications to start university. I also did psychology and maths at college, which all prepared me for the nursing course I wanted to take at university." (Suuban, f, 28, a student of BSc degree in nursing).

Not all of the young people participated in fulltime education after leaving school and many lacked the qualifications to move directly from school to HE. Yet the vast majority did continue their education, even though some

had spent a period of time in the labour market before starting their HE courses.

“I took the GNVQ route which is an option to A levels for those people who didn’t have the necessary GCSE grades. This was a diploma course, and I chose business and maths ... I thought that was the best option for me considering my situation at the time: I was working, and my literacy level wasn’t very good ... I think I have achieved what was possible to achieve ... [and] completed a 2 year course.” (Mahad, 22, studying for a degree in business and economics).

Table 5.3 below shows the educational profile of the young people interviewed. Overall, 16 out of 26 young men and women or 62 per cent of the respondents went to university. The table also reveals how many respondents have earned a university degree or are in the process of getting one. Six respondents have already qualified whereas ten are still at university. Amongst the latter is a young man who was unable to secure a job for two years after leaving university with a First-class Honours (1st) degree. He is now undertaking a self-financed MSc. Degree course in airport planning and management. Gender wise, 5 men out of 12 went to university whereas 11 out of 14 females (or close to 80%) attended or are attending university. Another young man (Zaki, 23) had some experience of HE at university by the age of 22. He had recently put off studying ‘to get married to his fiancée’ and is yet to return to complete his course.

In general, young people with the highest grades tended to attend the most prestigious universities. Among these are two females and one male who entered ‘elite’ universities within the ‘Russell Group’ (King’s College London (2 females), and a male doctor who trained at University College London). Half of all the university entrants (N= 8) joined a ‘New University’ (these are the former polytechnics or colleges of higher education that were given university status in 1992) as follows: the University of Hertfordshire (3), London Metropolitan University (2), the University of Westminster (2), and

Kingston University (1). Five young people entered less prestigious but established 'pre-1992' universities.

Females were over-represented in nursing, health and social care courses. But there is also a strong skew, among all members of the sample, towards medical and allied health professions. Breaking down the figures, we have 5 female nurses or trainee nurses, a female biomedical science student, a female dietician, a male doctor, a male biologist, and a male trainee pharmacist. Among the other subjects these young people are taking (or have taken) at university include the following: English language and literature taken by 2 females; media and communication studies being taken by a female student; business and economics taken by two males; and a young woman who took law (LLB) and is now a solicitor.

The research explored how Somali young people experience the transition to adulthood and the important issues affecting them, as well as their expectations and aspirations about their future prospects (compare Enneli et al., 2005). The data collected gives a particularly good sense of how the group of young people in the research have progressed in their education. But conclusions about their outcomes must remain tentative given that they were between nineteen and twenty-eight upon interviewing, and that most are still too young to have settled on a definitive trajectory (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

In prior research (eg., Coleman 1988; DuBois 2001; Osgood et al., 2005; Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, and Park 2005), groups mostly follow the educational trajectories set by their parents. That is to say, young people from better educated families often become educated themselves whereas most of those from less-educated families do not attain a university education. One rough way to measure whether young people in this research are replicating the educational status attained by their parents 'is to identify the median levels of achievement for both children and their parents' (Mollenkopf et al., 2005:459). The median for the parents was

having some college or post-secondary school training whereas the median for the young people was university education.²⁶

By comparing children's experience (above or below the median) with that of their parents, following Mollenkopf et al., (2005:459), we can generate a fourfold set of trajectories: (1) respondents with relatively well-educated parents who also achieved superior educational qualifications; (2) respondents from families with below-median educations who, blocked by negative experiences, also remained below the educational median for the two groups; (3) respondents with poorly educated parents who nonetheless did better than the parental median and attained university education; and (4) respondents with better-educated parents who succumbed to difficulties and failed to reach the median for the young people (i.e., achieved less than university education). Table 5.2 above shows how the young people break down across this typology.

In this research, as noted elsewhere, all the parents had high expectations of their children. Even in households where the collective experience of the parents is one of poor or lack of educational background, the parents still had high hopes for their children's success in education. Yet the young people mostly follow the educational trajectories set by their parents. Most respondents from less educated families have not attained university education whereas nearly all of those from better educated parents have gone on to university (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005). But there are also exceptions to this rule.

As table 5.2 shows, there are respondents with poorly educated parents who nonetheless managed to attain university education, and respondents with better educated parents who succumbed to difficulties and failed to get to university. The first group were often girls, whereas the second group are all young men with one exception. Respondents from less educated families who, blocked by negative experiences, failed to proceed to higher education were predominantly males, again with one or two exceptions.

This proves that, remarkably, the young women are getting more education than their male counterparts.

In the next chapter, I attempt to explain why some of the young people are experiencing a decline in skills and opportunities whereas others are en route to new possibilities. I shall also look at some of the difficult issues they faced as they grew up in London, as well as their initial steps towards employment.

Table 5.3 Educational Profile of young people interviewed in 2008/2009

Name & Gender	Place of birth	Age at Arrival	Age in 2009	Educational Qualifications in 2009
1. Su'ad (f)	Somalia	6 yrs	21 yrs	Working towards a BSc (Hons) degree in dietetics
2. Samiya (f) [Twin of no. 1]	Somalia	6 yrs	21	Working towards a BSc/MSc (Hons) degree in Osteopathic Medicine
3. Fahmo (f)	Somalia	8 yrs	22 yrs	None
4. Said (m)	Somalia	6 yrs	21 yrs	None
5. Iftin (f) [Sister of no. 4]	Somalia	4 yrs	19 yrs	Working towards a BSc (Hons) degree in Biomedical Sciences
6. Nafiso (f)	Somalia	11 yrs	26 yrs	GNVQ Qualifications
7. Dahabo (f) [Sister of no. 6]	Somalia	9 yrs	24 yrs	GNVQ Qualifications + still attending college with a view to eventually training as a nurse
8. Mahad (m)	Somalia	7 yrs	22 yrs	Working towards a BSc (Hons) degree in

[Brother of no. 6]				Economics
9. Rahman (m) [Brother of no. 6]	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	NVQ Qualifications
10. Farhan (m)	Somalia	10 yrs	25 yrs	BSc Degree in Biology
11. Nawal (f) [Sister of no. 10]	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	Working towards a BA Degree in English Language and Literature
12. Weris (f)	Somalia	7 yrs	23 yrs	Working towards Adult Nursing BSc Degree
13. Alas (m)	Somalia	7 yrs	25 yrs	NVQ Qualifications
14. Zaki (m)	Somalia	10 yrs	23 yrs	Deferred studies for a BSc Degree in Computer Networking
15. Kassim (m), [Brother of no. 14]	Somalia	8 yrs	21 yrs	None
16. Fardosa (f), [Sister of no. 14]	Somalia	7 yrs	20 yrs	Working towards a BSc Degree in Nursing
17. Suuban (f)	Somalia	12 yrs	28 yrs	Working towards a BSc Degree in Nursing
18. Jamal (m), [Brother of no. 17]	Somalia	11 yrs	27 yrs	None
19. Deeqa (f)	Somalia	12 yrs	27 yrs	BA Degree in English Language and Literature
20. Habboon (f), [Sister of no. 19]	Somalia	11 yrs	26 yrs	LLB; Also undertaking a Legal Practice Course (LPC) to become a solicitor
21. Adil (m), [Brother of no. 20]	Somalia	10 yrs	25 yrs	BA Degree in Business Management; also

no. 19]				undertaking an MSc course in 'Airport Planning & Management
22. Zahra (f), [Sister of no. 19]	Somalia	9 yrs	24 yrs	BSc (Hons) Degree in Adult Nursing [Registered Nurse]
23. Guure (m), [Brother of no. 19]	Germany	1 yr of age	20 yrs	Working towards a BSc Degree in Pharmacology
24. Dr. Guuleed (m), EXYP	Somalia	9 yrs	27 yrs	M.B.B.S.; also training to become a Consultant Gastroenterologist
25. Jidhaan (m), EXYP	Somalia	9 yrs	25 yrs	None
26. Maandeeq (f), EXYP	Somalia	5 yrs	20 yrs	Working towards a BSc Degree in Media and Communication Studies

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- EXYP means Extra Young Person. There were three extra young people interviewed for the project: 2 males, and a female. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because among the the children of my original parent interviewees, the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

CHAPTER VI

SOMALI YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE TRAJECTORIES INTO ADULTHOOD

PART II

This chapter is a continuation of chapter 5. It covers several key themes drawn from the interviews with young people. My analysis here will proceed in three steps. In the next section, I attempt to explain why some of the young people are experiencing a decline in skills and opportunities whereas others are en route to new possibilities. Part of this explanation will deal with the patterns of gendered outcomes evident in the data and what it means for Somali young people. I will then assess the employment position of young people and their attempts to secure jobs in the labour market that are commensurate with their qualifications. Lastly, in section 3, I examine the responses of young people to the adverse circumstances they faced as they grew up. London is a tough place to grow up and most of my respondents who grew up in the city faced significant hazards, ranging from prejudice against their ethnic group to the prevalence of drug use and violence in their neighborhoods (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

Progress, decline, and gendered paths

Tables in previous chapter show that the young Somali people in this study are moving ahead, and are doing better than the image of the 'lowest achieving group' held about them (see Khan & Jones 2003;

Harris 2004; Rutter 2006; Demie et al., 2008; Watters 2008).²⁷ In fact, they appear to be favourably situated relative to their black and ethnic minority counterparts with two or three generations in the United Kingdom. For instance, according to a very recent research by the National Skills Forum, 32% of Pakistani and 44% of Bangladeshi adults in the UK have no qualifications at all, and only 16% of black Caribbean young men go to university (National Skills Forum, 2010:4).

Given the many obstacles they must have overcome – war traumas, family separations, socioeconomic disadvantage, the challenge of mastering academic English, and difficult inner-city schools and neighbourhoods – it is remarkable that so many of them successfully completed their educational journeys and gained (or are in the process of gaining) HE qualifications.

The Somali parents attribute high instrumental value to their children's education. Having conducted two rounds of interviews with them, I can say that these parents held firm in their belief in the value of education for their children's future. Neither time spent in the UK nor perceived discrimination has diminished this belief (see Goldenberg et al., 2001:547). Hence they must have pushed their children firmly towards university education. All the acceptable occupations for their children required university education, and the children knew they would be seen to have let down the family if they did not go to university (compare Kasinitz et al., 2008).

Four factors emerge as critical to academic success, according to C. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008:355). These include family resources; social supports outside of the home; school contexts; and the child's disposition (which here means the ability to work hard, to remain optimistic yet realistic, and to recruit the support of others, including peers, friends, and teachers, etc.). But the key element that seems to drive the disposition of every young person

who is successful in their learning, in the view of these researchers, is the youngster's willingness and ability to work long hours (ibid., p. 356).

Samiya's (one of the twins) evidence lends support to the above argument. Because of the enormous obstacles her family came across upon arrival including parents separating and struggles with a new language, Samiya initially had a less than optimal school experience. But because she was such a conscientious and dedicated student, she soon rises to the top set in her class by sheer effort: "Because I came to England when I was six years old, when I first began school I wasn't up to date ... I was a bit behind. But it was in high school that I caught up a lot. First I began at the bottom and when I was in year ten, they set me up to do the GCSE foundation papers. And then I worked, and they told me: 'oh, what! If you tried a bit harder, you could do this for your coursework'. I stayed after school and did what I could, and then all of a sudden I found myself changing from foundation to the higher set. So I think it must have come quite quickly after the little bit more work I've done".

Some of the young people in this research also arrived with 'immigrant optimism and positive attitudes about school' (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995), and were all the more willing to work harder to succeed. One of these was Dr. Guuleed whose school motto was thus: "If you put in the effort and do what you have to do to learn, then you will succeed at school and I think no one can stop you." Guuleed arrived in the UK at the age of 9 in late 1991. He started school at year 5 primary school with no English and very little background by way of modern education. His hard work over the years culminated in his getting a place at a top medical school in London, and training to become a doctor. At the age of 27, he now works as a registrar at a university hospital in a major town in England.

There is also much evidence in this research to support the assertion that 'family resources, family strategies, and parental expectations' (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2004:21) are significant factors in the

success of immigrant young people. For instance, we have the case of Amino and her husband who took two of their children to North Africa because they 'were not achieving at school in this country'. Amina's daughter, Iftin (19) who was a very bright student but couldn't gain the high grades that she wanted here in the UK, retook most of her GCSEs abroad and gained 3A* and 2As. This success was due to Iftin being very well tutored by local teachers and the school environment in North Africa. Buoyed by the success in her GCSE tests, Iftin went on to do her A levels in the same country and gained further 3As in her A level exams. She is now doing a BSc degree in Biomedical Sciences at a top London university.

We also have the family of Muumin Abdullahi Daud whose daughter, Nawal, started to stay away from school without permission during her secondary school. She became too lazy to do her work, and would go out with friends. This led to police and social services getting involved with the family. The family decided not to send the girl to school for a year and instead educate her at home in an attempt, according to Muumin, "to stop her from becoming delinquent and antisocial." In the end, the family succeeded in turning the girl around. She has successfully completed her schooling, and now goes to university.

The family of Awralo Abdisamad Dhoorre is another case in point. Single mother Awralo sent her daughter (Weris) to Somalia after she failed in some of her exams in a college of further education in North London. While the story of Weris' return to Somalia and her presence in Mogadishu for several years raises troubling questions, she had nevertheless overcome most of her difficulties upon return to London and has embarked on a path of personal development and educational advancement. Weris was a nursing student at a top London university when I interviewed her at the beginning of 2009, and was expecting to graduate in 2010 (see Weris' story, Appendix B).

Family support and student hard work, while immensely important, cannot alone guarantee educational success. The kinds of schools available to

young people are also vitally important (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2004:22; C. Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:366). This research collected evidence reported by the young people of good schools and good teachers that helped them achieve their full potential. Here is Adil (m, 25): “The quality of teaching at my school was very good. I was able to settle in very quickly because everyone was very friendly. Most of my school experiences were very positive. I was lucky enough to grow up in an area where poverty wasn’t an issue, so I never really experienced any negativity. Besides it was also a multicultural environment so I never felt like an outsider and, in that sense, I felt like I was very lucky.” In fact, both Adil’s parents and his siblings, who all grew up and went to school in a borough in West London, felt the same way about their school as Adil did. They all talked about good teachers with high academic and behavioural standards, a good mix of students in school, and a nice surrounding neighbourhood context.

Another factor in young people’s progress and attainment was the patterns of their linguistic assimilation. Whilst almost everyone has achieved full English proficiency, those young people who went to university were more likely than others to have strong academic English. They were also able to communicate in the written word more effectively, as they reported. Here is Farhan (m, 25): “For me, education in school, the first thing I learned was to be able to write in a very formal standard English and to be able to express myself in writing. I think it is very important to have excellent written communication; and also to develop good inter-personal skills, like doing presentations ... etc.” Others developed a strong appreciation of the importance of reading and writing while still at school.

Many of the young people who succeeded in their education also said that they made friends with like-minded youth through school or family connections. These friendship networks provided them with positive social connections and supportive mentors ‘at a time of identity confusion, multiple options, and significant transitions’ (C. Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:358). Mahad (m, 22) is an example of a young man who, unlike his

brother, avoided involvement with the local gangs, and created a positive peer group fellowship around him instead: "So mine are good friends who are in the same stage of life as me ... we recognize things together [as] we are from the same background. It is easier to mix with your own type of people so to speak. I do have the odd occasional friends who are [from] outside of my race, obviously that is also very good and very important. ... May be I don't socialize with them outside my workplace or outside the classroom. But still I would consider hanging out with them."

In fact most of these young people had friends, including genuine friendships, with people from multi-cultural backgrounds. Here is a typical response about friendships: "I've got Jamaican friends, Jewish friends. It is because of the schools and the college I went to" (Su'ad, f, 21). Samiya, another successful young woman and the twin of Su'ad, had this to say about her friendship networks: "I've friends that I had all my life, and they are like Ugandan, English, British, Jewish, (and) Hispanic. Well, basically every continent you can think of ... but then I have university friends. Because of the area (where the university is situated), all of them are white Caucasians. They're older than me because I am the youngest in my course." In all, successful young people emphasized the need to have friends from likeminded people and support networks that are beneficial. They would be reluctant to develop friendships with young people who they saw as being negative and troublemakers. These students were also less likely to report problems in their school experience.

This research has also received evidence of a sizable minority of young people, especially but not exclusively boys, that are falling behind educationally. In the data, I have six young men and two young women who fit this description. Boys were more likely to disengage from school, and hence become disaffected as they grew older. All the parents of these young people, bar one, had great hopes for their future when I interviewed them in 1997. For the young people, however, these parental hopes and dreams have become difficult to sustain. Over time, most have experienced considerable

difficulties, ranging from underachievement and disruptive behaviour in school, through to the misuse of alcohol and drugs and serious or persistent offending (cf. Newburn & Shiner 2005).

In seeking to address these issues, the families have devised various interventions. Said (m, 21) was returned to Somalia in 2004 after 'falling with a wrong crowd' who the parents suspected of being involved in 'crime and antisocial behaviour'. In his mother's telling words: "We thought that we would lose him if we didn't bring some changes to his life, and that was why we decided to send him to Somalia." He spent two years in Mogadishu, mainly doing Islamic education. He was later given the opportunity to undertake further education in North Africa at his parents' expenses. But he refused, and had returned to London. He then went straight back to his old group. When I last heard about him towards the end of 2009, he was a NEET – not in education, employment or training.

When I interviewed Muhibo (a mother of six) in 1997, she told me that her three youngest children had fitted in well with the school system contrary to her expectations. Qatar who was 8 at the time is now held at a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) for 'drug related offences'. He was imprisoned in July 2007 and is due to be released, she says, in the middle of 2010. Her youngest son, Qorraxey (17) still lives with the parents and goes to college. The girl (Fahmo, 21) hasn't achieved much at school. When I interviewed her in 2009, she was a NEET – not in education, employment or training. The mother went out of her way to try and help her daughter by taking her on holidays abroad on at least four occasions. However, Fahmo's lack of success in anything so far has very much dented both her self-esteem and her motivation to do anything for herself. She is a depressed young woman, greatly affected by a pessimistic sense of inadequacy and a despondent lack of activity. Clearly, the parents in this case were unable 'to guide their children's journey through dysfunctional schools and neighborhoods and around structural and symbolic violence' (see C. Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:226).

Hussein G. Waasuge had sent his 2 older boys (Zaki, 22 & Kassim, 21) to Somalia when Kassim “dropped out of school and started getting involved with gangs”. Like Said above, they were put into Islamic education admixed with regular school subjects, such as maths, science and English. When both were returned to London, Zaki restarted his schooling but Kassim went back to his old friends who were still engaged in ‘delinquent and criminal behaviour’. After only a short time back in London, he was facing a multitude of criminal charges. He caused more trouble to himself and his family and was soon returned to Somalia again, this time for good. He now has a wife and three children and, according to his father, runs a large farm in central Somalia. Zaki managed to complete further education courses in college, and enrolled for a computer networks course at university. A year into this course, he put off his studies and got married to his fiancée. He too was a NEET. His wife was expecting their first child, when I last talked to him at the end of 2009.

When I interviewed Abdi Iidow Sharraawe in 1997, he talked about his older children: 2 daughters (both 17) and a 16 year old son who were all in secondary school at the time. Abdi reported that the girls were more motivated than the boy, Jamal, who he thought was very weak educationally and has not learned much from school. I returned to interview Abdi and other members of his family 12 years later in 2009, and this is what I learned about the progress or decline of the 3 young people above. Suuban (28) is a nursing student and is the only one among the older crop who, Abdi believes, has ‘succeeded in her education and has a good career ahead of her’ (see Suuban’s story, Appendix A). Fatima (28) got married as soon as she left school, and now lives with her husband and two children as a full-time mother. The end of the road to education for her, as far as Abdi is concerned.

Jamal (27), Abdi’s eldest son, left school with no qualifications. He hasn’t gone to college, and never worked. He has no qualifications, no skills, and

no employment experience. According to the father, Jamal is out and about at night with friends, and spends his days sleeping. According to the father, Jamal hasn't figured out where he wants to be or what he wants to do with his life. The last time I heard about him at the end of 2009, Jamal was a NEET – not in education, employment or training (see Jamal's story, Appendix B).

Jidhaan is another sad story. Brought over by an older sister, he arrived in the UK at the age of 9 in 1993. He says he never saw his mum or dad, and was initially (before the age of 9) raised by his grandmother who later died in Kenya. Within 6 months of arrival, he became disillusioned with school and dropped out altogether. Just idly walking the streets and selling drugs became his social vocation. He says he led a life of alcohol, drugs and crime from then on, but has now learned from the mistakes of the past. At the age of 13, Jidhaan was removed from his sister's care and was placed with foster parents by social services. This was a Jamaican household headed by a female which, as Jidhaan himself claims, was broad-minded and tolerant of his drug taking. He stayed with this family until he reached the age of 19 at which time he 'stopped taking drugs'. The latter was inspired by a friend's sudden death. Now at age 25, Jidhaan is a NEET (see Jidhaan's story, Appendix B).

Most immigrant children and their parents arrive with great hopes. Some succeed while others 'decline in skills and opportunities over time' (C. Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:168). According to the theory of 'segmented assimilation' (Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes & Rumbaut 2001), the latter group are said to be downwardly assimilating. Downward assimilation emerges not as a deliberate path trodden by young people, 'but as an outgrowth of a web of constraints, bad luck, and limited opportunities' (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller 2005: 1031).

For example, we read in her story that Fahmo (f, 21) encountered serious difficulties in learning academic English. She was placed in a mainstream

class in a strife-ridden school where it became difficult for her to flourish. While she received some support lessons, as she says in her statement, she didn't get appropriate academic support. It was late in the day when she found out that she didn't have the knowledge and skills required to take her GCSE academic qualification tests at the age of 16. She left school barely able to read or write.

Similarly, we read in the stories of Jidhaan (m, 25) and Rahman (m, 20) and also in the parental stories of Daruuro Abdulle Guuleed and Halimo-Sa'diyo Hashi Elmi that some parents did not have much educational experience and were not able to provide tangible educational supports to their children. In other cases, as the stories of Kassim (m, 21) and his father (Hussein Guure Waasuge) and also the story of Amino Tifow Sabriye and her son Said (21) amply demonstrate, the parents' authority had become disconnected and ineffective. They simply could not help their children avoid 'the negative sub-cultures' (Portes & Rumbaut 2001) prevalent in their neighbourhoods. Said's story also clearly shows how a protracted separation within the family (his father's late arrival in the UK, some six years after her got separated from his family because of the wars) has created a cosmic disconnect between father and son. In the words of the father, "whenever I come into the house, Said runs upstairs and will not come down until either I go to bed or leave the house". Sadly, in all these cases, young people's relationships with potentially supportive adults had become negative.

As we read their stories, we could see that Kassim (m, 21) and Jidhaan (m, 25) were two young men who 'had personal, family, and situational obstacles that only the most resilient of individuals could possibly overcome' (see C. Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008:171). In both cases, a host of disruptive factors—a traumatic childhood, extensive family separations and problematic reunifications, and a toxic school and neighborhood *as well as bad transnational moves (in the case of Kassim)*—came together in a perfect storm of disruption and failure (ibid., p. 171; my italics).

I now turn briefly to the issue of young women surpassing young males in educational achievement in this research. As noted above, we have 11 out of 14 females (or close to 80 per cent) as opposed to 5 out of 12 males (or just under 42 per cent) attending university. Even under the most difficult of circumstances (be it family or otherwise), it is the young women who persist in their efforts to succeed with their education whereas the young men succumb to the pressures (or the temptations) and drop out. This is consistent with what the literature says about gender differences in educational attainment among immigrant youth. Regardless of ethnicity, girls from immigrant families often have higher academic engagement, lower dropout rates, better grades, and higher levels of educational attainment than boys (e.g., Kao & Tienda 1995; Fuligni 1997; Rumbaut 1997; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Zhou & Bankston 2001; Fuligni & Witkow 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hillard 2004).

In the UK, detailed analysis of Black and ethnic minority qualifications at age 16 suggest that social class and gender differences (girls outperforming boys) were apparent within each ethnic group and that, in general, the gender gap was of similar proportions across all ethnic groups (Gillborn & Mirza 2000, cited by Maughan 2005:90). More recently, it has been suggested that girls' attainment was higher than boys, on average, in each of the principal minority ethnic groups (Bhattacharyya et al. 2003: 12, cited by Gillborn & Rollock 2010:141). Regarding higher education, while males and females of most ethnic minority groups go to university in very similar proportions, there are more than twice as many females in higher education for Black British Caribbeans (Race for Opportunity 2010:5). Even on a Western European level, second generation women tend to fare better than their male counterparts in terms of continuation in education, and the attainment of higher educational qualifications (Heath et al., 2008:217).

Several hypotheses have been put forward to account for this pattern. Some researchers suggest that, over the past few decades, a redefinition of gender roles has resulted in a shift in educational ambitions among young women,

which are now more aligned with male ambitions (Schneider and Stevenson 1999, cited by Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005: 1089). Thus, increasingly, women are placing greater value on 'traditional' masculine occupational qualities such as status and authority, while also continuing to value altruism in occupational choices (Marini et al. 1996). A more common explanation concerns gender role socialization. This hypothesis proposes that girls succeed in school because to be feminine is to 'be good' in general, while masculinity is associated with resisting authority (Mickelson 1989, cited by Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005: 1089).

Paradoxically, it is often the maintenance of traditional gender roles in the home that pushes girls to succeed academically, and thus to pursue educational and occupational ambitions that are non-traditionally gendered (Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005: 1092). For example, Zhou and Bankston (2001) find that, within Vietnamese immigrant families, parents exercise greater social control over their daughters. Since girls have higher standards for good behaviour, this carries over into good behaviour and achievement in school. Girls who succeed in school are more likely to want to continue their education and to aspire to high status careers (*ibid.*).

Plunkett et al. (2009:259-6) expressed most succinctly the numerous explanations offered for the superior educational attainment of girls: (1) immigrant girls may be monitored more than boys, which may insulate them from negative peer and neighbourhood effects; (2) immigrant girls may look forward to school since they see it as an outlet to socialize with peers outside of the home; (3) immigrant girls may perceive more social support from peers and teachers (who are generally female); (4) immigrant girls' domestic responsibilities may contribute to an increased ability to multitask at school; and (5) immigrant boys may perceive more discrimination and negative expectations from teachers.

The fact of girls outperforming boys in the immigrant community contradicts the traditional position of women in many of the origin

countries where gender inequalities in education still prevails (For a review, see Buchmann & Hannum 2001). That, in just one generation, patterns of educational and occupational outcomes differ sharply from the previous generation is an astounding achievement (Zhou & Bankston 2001).

It must be noted here that all the parents I interviewed for this research expressed high hopes and aspirations for their children's success, regardless of gender, at school and in society. That Somali parents urged their daughters on to attain higher education is not a rejection of traditional gender roles, but rather a response to both the opportunities and necessities of education in the United Kingdom for both men and women (compare Zhou & Bankston 2001).

In all, while the pursuit of higher education for Somali young adults is a laudable effort, this research uncovered evidence that they face difficulties in progressing into employment. Entry into the labour markets can be especially difficult for many of them. I turn to this issue next.

Table 6.1 Young people's education and employment status in 2008/2009

No.	Name & Gender of Young Person	Age in 2008/9	Education in 2008/9	Employment in 2008/9
1	Su'ad (f)	21 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student
2	Samiya (f)	21 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student
3	Fahmo (f)	22 yrs	No Qualifications	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
4	Said (m)	21 yrs	No Qualifications	NEET [Not in Education,

				Employment, or Training]
5	Iftin (f)	19 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student
6	Nafiso (f)	26 yrs	NVQ Qualifications	Parent & NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
7	Dahabo (f)	24 yrs	NVQ Qualifications + P/T College Education	Care Assistant
8	Mahad (m)	22 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student + P/T Job
9	Rahman (m)	20 yrs	NVQ Qualifications	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
10	Farhan (m)	25 yrs	Has a BSc. Degree in Biology + Training as Legal Adviser	Volunteer Community Organizer
11	Nawal (f)	20 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student
12	Weris (f)	23 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Trainee Nurse
13	Alas (m)	25 yrs	NVQ Qualifications	Driver + works @ Family Poundshop
14	Zaki (m)	23 yrs	Completed ½ BSc Degree Course @ University	Parent & NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
15	Kassim (m)	21 yrs	No Qualifications	Farmer in Somalia
16	Fardosa (f)	20 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Trainee Nurse

17	Suuban (f)	28 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Trainee Nurse
18	Jamal (m)	27 yrs	No Qualifications	Parent & NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]
19	Deeqa (f)	27 yrs	BA Degree in English Language and Literature	Editorial Assistant with a Publishing Company
20	Habboon (f)	26 yrs	LLB; also undertaking a Legal Practice Course (LPC) to become a Solicitor	Solicitor with a London Law Firm
21	Adil (m)	25 yrs	BA Degree in Business Management + undertaking MSc. Degree course	Full-time Graduate Student
22	Zahra (f)	24 yrs	BSc (Hons) Degree in Adult Nursing	Hospital Nurse (RN)
23	Guure (m)	20 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student + P/T Job
24	Maandeeq (f)	20 yrs	Undertaking 1 st Degree University Education	Full-time Student
25	Dr. Guuleed, (m), EXYP	27 yrs	M.B.B.S.; also training to become Consultant Gastroenterologist	Hospital Registrar
26	Jidhaan, (m), EXYP	25 yrs	No Qualifications	NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training]

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- EXYP means Extra Young Person. There were three extra young people interviewed for the project: 2 males, and a female. I enlisted these extra young people to the project because among the children of my original interviewees, the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

Somali young people and employment

Table 6.1 above provides an overview of the education and employment status of the young people in 2008/9. The data gives a particularly good sense of how far they have progressed in their education. However, conclusions about their career outcomes must remain tentative not least because most participants are still relatively young (19-28, with a median age of 23 years). This means that even those who have professional occupations (and there were quite a few of them) would have had their careers only just begun. Thus we cannot know whether even these upwardly mobile individuals may eventually hit “glass ceilings” or how future economic transformations will shape their work lives (see Kasinitz et al. 2008:174).

This one caveat aside, the data should give us enough information to understand the work life of participants in their early through mid to late twenties, and whether (or not) they are experiencing some of ‘the barriers to the labour market’ which their parents faced (see Bloch 2009:175). Among the barriers identified include personal and human capacity factors (i.e., English language/literacy, and lack of qualifications and work experience in the UK) as well as structural barriers, such as employer discrimination (*ibid.*).

At the time of interviews, 11 participants (3 males and 8 females) were in full-time university education. What clearly distinguishes this large portion of the sample from the second big group (the NEETs) is their commitment to education. This pattern is consistent with ‘Arnett’s concept of emerging adulthood’ (see Osgood et al., 2005:343). The emphasis on investment in education and on an upward trajectory of employment suggests that these young men and women are more concerned with improving themselves individually and professionally than with settling into traditional family-oriented adult roles (*ibid.*).

A few of the participants (3, coloured in sky blue light) are in professional occupations (a doctor, a nurse, and a solicitor). This group had strong academic abilities, attitudes and values during their schooling, which in turn have been shown to be related to the resources and the value placed on education in families of higher social class (Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele 1998, cited by Osgood et al., 2005:345).

Three participants, one female (no. 6) and two young males (nos. 14 & 18), got married and have become parents without jobs. The female has one child, 5 year-old daughter, and the males are new fathers. It is said that having high expectations for marriage and family at an earlier age rather than for education and qualifications is consistent with a pathway into adulthood characterized more by family roles of marriage and parenthood than by education and employment (Schneider and Coleman 1993; Sewell and Hauser 1980; all cited Osgood et al., 2005:345).

There were three further young people (two males and a female, coloured in yellow) who were advanced in their world of work, but with jobs they viewed as steps on a career path rather than long term. One of the males, Mahad (22) has been working in the local Sainsburys' for the past 3-4 years, whereas 20 year-old Guure has worked in Pizza restaurants and local supermarkets since he was 17. The young woman (Deeqa, 27) has a job as an editorial assistant.

This group's investments in education were no less than that of the professionals. The female had already earned her bachelor's degree and has also embarked on a part-time MA course. The two young men were currently engaged in their first degree courses at university, but were also working at reduced hours. I call these three young people 'working singles' (compare Osgood et al., 2005; Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, & Park 2005) as they are working, unmarried and are still living with their parents.

Two other 'working singles' are Alas (m, 25), and Dahabo (f, 24) (coloured in warm grey). They are both working and still living at home with their parents. Whilst not as educated as the above two young men, they had regular jobs. Alas works as a driver for a London Council. He also had a second job on the side at his mum's shop. This young man gave the impression that he was firmly established in the world of work chiefly on account of his having two jobs and presumably earning more money than other young people of his age. Yet his employment profile showed the limits of his education, and it was not clear that he was taking steps to gain the post-secondary education he had lacked so far.

Dahabo, on the other hand, is pursuing further education at college alongside her part-time care assistant job. She brushed up her literacy and numeracy skills, and gained NVQ qualifications. She says she wants to be able to earn her own living, and pay her rents and other bills. But she can't do that now because she is doing a low-level unskilled job with very little income. She says she has no plans to get married until she can secure a long-term, stable job with good earnings. That is why she is investing more time in education than at work. She is undertaking a nursing access and foundation course which, if she completes successfully, will allow her to study for a diploma in nursing.

As the table shows, the second largest group in the list are the so-called NEETs (coloured in melon). This is an acronym for the government classification of young people currently "Not in Employment, Education or Training." In the UK, the classification comprises people aged between 16 and 24 (see the Centre for Social Justice 2009:8), but the focus has often been on those who become NEET after leaving compulsory education (16-18 year-olds) (see Rennison et al., 2005; Coles et al., 2002; Social Exclusion Unit 1999). However, there are countries that consider even people in their thirties relevant to the discussion of employment, education and training. In Japan, for instance, NEETs comprise people aged between 15 and 34 who are unemployed, unmarried, not enrolled in school or engaged in

housework, and not seeking work or the technical training needed for work (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NEET>).

It has been argued that the "NEET group" is not a uniform set of individuals, but consists of those who will be NEET for a short time while essentially testing out a variety of opportunities and those who have major and often multiple issues and are at long term risk of remaining disengaged (*ibid.*). Gauthier and Furstenberg (2005:169) call the latter group 'Disengaged Young Adults' – defined as being out of school, nonemployed, nonpartnered and childless. Referring to the same group, Williamson and Middlemiss (1999:13) coined the term 'disaffected youth' which incorporates 'those who are temporarily sidetracked, the essentially confused, and the deeply alienated'.

In the vast literature on youth disaffection, disengagement, or non-participation, there is a split focus on two groups (Newburn & Shiner 2005:7). The first are those of compulsory school age who, for whatever the reason, are absent from education or, while remaining in education, are significantly underachieving or exhibiting disruptive behaviour. The second group are those who have passed the age of compulsory education and have neither continued in education nor are to be found in training or employment (*ibid.*). I use this general organizing approach in my use of the term NEET, especially as I use it for people above the appointed age of 24 because they are exactly that - NEET.

As shown in table 6.1 above, I have in my NEET group three people above the age of 24: a married young woman with a child and two young men, one of them also married with a child. The rest are young people who have 'left school but not made any other transitions to adulthood' (Gauthier and Furstenberg 2005:169). Altogether, there are seven NEETs in the group (5 men and 2 women) whose ages ranged from 20 to 27. Subject no. 15 Kassim (coloured in red) could potentially be another NEET if he were in the UK. He was sent back to Somalia several years ago, and is now said to be a farmer.

The in-depth interviews I conducted allow us to distinguish the various individuals in the NEET group. Three of them have obtained educational qualifications (such as NVQs or their equivalents); four (3 males and 1 female) have no qualifications. Two have had work experience, whereas four (again 3 males and 1 female) have had no work experience, and have suffered extended unemployment. The two women in the group are a mother with a young child, and a younger single woman aged 22. The mother, Nafiso, has had work experience at some point in her life but the younger woman has had none.

Nafiso finished school in 1998, and went on to do “health and social care” courses in a local college. She then started “a midwifery course at Middlesex University, but decided to somehow not continue with it”. In the year 2000, aged 17, she got married to a cousin who was living in America. She then went to live with him in the U. S. for the next 1½ years, returning to the UK in September 2002. Her husband also came with her so that they could continue living together. The husband worked as a bus driver in America, but needed a work permit to do likewise in London. Unfortunately, he couldn’t get that work permit due to a legal technicality.

As they couldn’t secure their own accommodation in London, the young couple decided to move to a town in the South East where the husband had close relatives. They secured a flat, and Nafiso got a job as a nursery nurse. But the husband could not get a job without a work permit. They had a daughter, their first and only child so far, in January 2005. Nafiso didn’t return to work after the birth of her daughter. When he couldn’t secure a job in the UK, the husband returned to America. Nafiso moved back to London shortly afterwards, and stayed with her family until she acquired her own place to rent. Apart from the 12 months or so she worked at a day care centre in 2003/2004, she hasn’t done any other work, nor undertook any education or training (see Nafiso’s story, Appendix A).

The younger woman, Fahmo, started a two year business course in college after leaving school. Unfortunately, she found it difficult and withdrew from it. She then chose another course which was about health and social care. Again she found it difficult and again dropped out of that course too. She then tried to retake her old English and maths GCSE courses but, in her words, "that too didn't work". Asked about why it "too didn't work," she said: "I was going there for one year, and I didn't pass on anything". After that, Fahmo says, she stopped going to college.

Fahmo has had no work experience at any point in her life. At some point after leaving school, according to her mother, there was a huge change in her daughter. The likeable normal girl she knew became inactive, isolated and detached. Fahmo took refuge in watching TV because she lacks all other interests in life. She feels passive, tired and less able to do anything compared to when she was younger. Whilst she was never assessed for a statement of special educational needs, her parents are now too worried that Fahmo may be suffering from some form of a learning disorder or a psychological illness that is interfering with her attempts to make a satisfactory life for herself. Whatever the problem, this young woman is clearly at a longterm risk of remaining disengaged.

Of the men in the NEET group, the oldest is Jamal. Now aged 27, Jamal has been unemployed for most of his adult life, save for brief periods of irregular work. I asked him where have things gone wrong? And he simply says that he has not achieved much at school. This is what Jamal says happened after he left school: "I finished high school in 1997 then I went to various colleges ... I attended 3 different colleges since completing my GCSE's. I took a GNVQ intermediate course in I.C.T; I left after the second year of that course...After leaving college I took an 8 month training course with a recycling company. The training was based in North London, but because the company relocated to Liverpool I was never able to complete the course."

The brief periods of irregular employment Jamal referred to include a short period of time when he worked as a 'self-employed driver, delivering new cars'. He also briefly worked, he says, as an 'ambulance driver for a private agency'. He is not saying how long he's had these jobs and why he is no longer doing them. During interview, Jamal talked in Somali even when asked to speak in English for the benefit of the tape. He simply didn't sound terribly confident in his English. According to his father, Jamal hasn't mastered the English language properly, and he also lacks the minimum skills required in securing a job. Although he got married and has become a new father, when I last spoke to him in the middle of 2009, Jamal was still a NEET (see Jamal's story, Appendix B).

At 25 years of age, Jidhaan is another NEET. Brought over by an older sister, he arrived in London at the age of 9 in 1993. He got involved in street life shortly after arrival when he fell in with a wrong crowd of people. Within 6 months of arrival, Jidhaan became disillusioned with school and dropped out altogether. He then led a life of alcohol, drugs and crime. He says he is now matured, and learned from the mistakes of the past. Jidhaan elected to speak Somali throughout the interview. Despite living most of his life in the UK, he was clearly more at ease in his native tongue than English.

At the age of 13, Jidhaan was removed from his sister's care and was placed with foster parents by social services. By then, he had too many problems to be turned around by foster carers. Even as he lived in their care, he committed street robberies and sold drugs for money. There was no going back to education. Jidhaan says that he had been imprisoned twice. On the first occasion, he was arrested for his involvement in a fight 'while carrying a knife' and was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. On the second occasion, he says he was arrested for vehicle theft and was given a 3 month jail term.

Jidhaan makes these claims about educational qualifications and employment history. He says that he has 'GNVQ qualifications in Maths, English and IT'. He also tells me that he had worked three times: once at

McDonald's; another time in a warehouse; and the last time at a Tesco store in North London. I asked him what was the job in Tesco, for how long did he do it, and why did he leave? He said he worked at 'Tesco Customer Services' for three years. His answer for leaving: "I got sick and tired of the job, but I am now looking for a job as a driver". I asked him if he has a driving licence, and he replied 'yes'. I must say here that there is no way of corroborating these claims because Jidhaan wouldn't let me talk to those who knew him up-close.

When I first met Jidhaan at the beginning of March 2009, he was unemployed and told me that he was looking for a job. He said the same thing again when I saw him last week, 3rd Dec. 2009. I have a hunch, and the friend at the mosque agrees, that Jidhaan may have remained disengaged and unemployed ever since he left care at the age of 19. He has in fact no fixed abode.

At 23 years of age, Zaki was a NEET. He said he put off going to university this year (academic year 2008/9) so that he could get a job, and get married: "I found things getting harder, and want to get a job and start a family." This arrangement had the blessing of both his family and that of the young woman about to be married.

Zaki's formative years at school were fun, varied and gave him a good experience. However, he wasn't able to take his GCSE exams because he was sent back to Somalia by his parents. He stayed there for 1½ years and, upon his return, went to college to 'study electronics'. After the completion of his course, he went to university where he intended to stay for four years to earn his degree. However, things did not go according to plan. Financial need was clearly a barrier to continuing his education. He had to stop the course and seek employment, he said. He applied for all possible jobs. His entire time in 2008/9 was devoted to looking for work, yet he could not secure a job. He just laboured to no avail. At the end of 2009, he was

married with a child and was living with his wife at her family home, but they were both neets.

Said (21), was also returned to Somalia by his parents as soon as he finished school in 2004. He started going out with youths who gather on the streets at night and would not come back home until the next morning, according to his mum. This was something he did everyday as a matter of routine. In his mother's telling words: "We thought that we would lose him if we didn't bring some changes to his life, and that was why we decided to send him to Somalia." He stayed with his grandmother and other relatives in Mogadishu for the next two years.

Said also spent seven months in a country in North Africa after returning from Somalia. His younger brother and sister were already staying there with their mum to prepare for their GCSE and A level exams. The mother tried very hard to encourage Said to do likewise so that he could have better prospects for education or employment upon his return to the UK. But Said refused his mother's wise counsel and returned to London to be with his friends. Although his parents think Said got wiser because of the time he spent in Somalia, they say the problem was that he went straight back to his old group when he came back to London.

I asked Said what he did after returning to the UK in the middle of 2007. He says he couldn't find a job because employers would ask for experience, and he didn't have any. In his own words: "An 18 year old would not have experience. ... And that is where the problem lies. If you look for a job, they'll ask for experience, experience, experience. If the job is not going to give you experience, who is going to give it to you?" Said has no doubt his underachievement at school is where it all started. He also thinks that he should have stayed longer in education rather than leaving school at 16.

As I wrote his story towards the end of Sep. 2009, I spoke to Said's dad over the phone for an update on his son's position. He told me that Said had

found a job at a bakery recently. He has had the job for about 4 weeks by then. Said has taken up this job so that he could gain employment experience. It was by no means certain, however, that Said was going to be able to hold down the job for long. So far, the father told me, he has called in sick for at least a number of days. A few weeks later, I heard that Said had lost the job, and reverted to his old ways.

At the time of my interview with him in the beginning of December 2008, Rahman was doing a Royal Mail Christmas casual work. It was a temporary job for which he had to work a late-night shift covering a seven day week over the Christmas period, and the salary was £7.50 per hour. Rahman was happy with his 'little earner,' saying it gave him an opportunity to gain 'valuable new experience and to make new friends'.

This was not Rahman's first short-term or temporary job, however. As a Fitness Instructor/Personal Trainer, he has done casual work for various gyms across London since completing his training in 2006. This was a two year Fitness Instructor training course which Rahman undertook after finishing school in 2004. It was designed to provide 'an advanced level of exercise and fitness knowledge', and has lead to Rahman gaining a recognized certificate known as "Central YMCA qualifications, Levels 2 and 3."

But the economic benefits of such qualifications were largely illusory. Low wages and uncertainty about ongoing work made it impossible for Rahman to support himself. This led him to rethink about his whole life and to embark on a new course of study in college. He decided to do an access to higher education business course with a view to going to university next year (2009) to read economics. Although he undertook the course in a college in North London, Rahman didn't manage to get the grades required to go to university. Thus, throughout the latter part of 2009, Rahman was a NEET.

I held a brief conversation with Rahman one last time when I bumped into him at my local supermarket one evening in the New Year of 2010. He told me that he was very disappointed to not get the grades he'd hoped for, and also to not have gone to university. He also hasn't been feeling like doing any courses at college this year. He had a very short-lived Christmas casual work with Royal Mail at a depot in South London. This was again a night shift between 10 pm to 7 am. But he got the sack after only 3 nights into the job. The circumstances of his dismissal are elaborated in his story (see Appendix B).

Rahman also told me that he secured another job just prior to Christmas. This new job is related to youth work by an organization known as Positive Change, and Rahman expects to start work in the Brixton area of South London with this group at the beginning of the year.

Rahman's story looks more like irregular employment than strictly NEET. He had several jobs in a short space of time. He also had long, and sometimes short, gaps between jobs. Throughout the course of 2009, for instance, he was unemployed. He had a Christmas casual with Royal Mail in 2008 and again at the end of December 2009, although he was given the sack within a few days of taking up the latter. The crucial point here is that Rahman had no jobs (casual or regular) in between Dec. 2008 and Dec. 2009.

But even when he had (and this applies to almost all the others), it wasn't the kind of work most of them – or their parents – would have aspired to. It tended to be not just routine and low-paid, but also well outside the mainstream economy (compare Abrams 2010). Above all, these young people (the NEET group) had accumulated significant amounts of nonwork in their early to mid-twenties, a period when young adults should be developing the job skills and work records that lead to long-term stable employment and wage growth and that protect against poverty (see Corcoran & Matsudaira 2005:386).

Of the six respondents who left higher education (3 women & 3 men), as shown in table 6.1 above, three began to establish themselves in professional careers. Three others had followed general degree courses, and hence tended to be less well prepared when it came to finding work (compare Furlong & Cartmel 2005). Of these (2 men and a woman), the female had found employment as an editorial assistant after protracted periods of nonemployment and working in temporary positions, whereas the two men were unable to find work two years after they left university. They tried a variety of methods to secure employment, such as making contact with employers, searching newspapers, the internet and local adverts, but all to no avail. They could not draw on networks and personal contacts to help secure jobs because they had none.

Gender-wise, all three women were employed at the time of interviews whereas only one of the males (the doctor) entered a secure employment. The other two men who I call 'workless graduates' (coloured in violet deep) found it harder to enter the jobs market, and hence decided to extend their education. Adil went back to university, privately paid for by his family, whereas Farhan chose to train as a legal adviser with a Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB). Interestingly, none of these two young men regarded their race or class origin as a barrier to finding work. They saw qualifications as a barrier, and hence sought to gain further qualifications.

Most of the young people in this research were not applying for jobs during their teens because they had stayed on at school or college. However, a few females who did apply felt that they were discriminated against because they chose to wear the hijab. Su'ad (21, university student) described negative personal experiences once employers learned that she was a Muslim. Some of these comments are in order:

Q: Have you ever worked?

A: I never had a job, but I am looking for one now. But it is also hard to get a job, with a headscarf.

Q: I want you to talk about that. Why do you think that is so?

A: Because on the phone you sound like a different person. When I go to jobs, if I call up and then get there for the interview, they will have to see you and then I go in and (they say) "Ooh, Ok! With blahs" and then they change their approach.

Q: And is that your experience?

A: That is my experience. Also I don't think people mean to stereotype, but they do in some way. It is not their fault, and it is not your fault ... it is the media's fault may be, and politics. Also it happened to a couple of my friends. ... Some of my Asian friends know they are not gonna get a job with a normal employer. If they are going to work for an Asian employer, then it is different.

Weris (a student nurse aged 23) also claims to have had negative personal experience on the basis that she was wearing her Muslim headscarf at a job interview. I am not sure, however, that one can necessarily draw the same conclusions as she does from her evidence:

[The advertised job] was at famous shopping centre in London. I had my initial interview over the phone where I spoke to a gentleman who was really excited about my applying for the job at that point. He was really ecstatic about it, saying: "oh yes, you sound like the right character". So I went in for the 2nd interview, face-to-face, thinking that I already had the job in the bag. Just that in the minute I showed, I was not interviewed by him but by a woman. I really wouldn't know what his reaction would've been if he had seen me. The woman said I heard that you had a nice chat with Kevin the other day. Kevin was the man. I said yes, I did have a good chat with him. When the interview came to a close, she said that they had loads and loads of people applying for this job, and that she have to call me. I said okay, let us see what happens, and left. I had a phone call from Kevin couple of days later. He said that he was sorry to say that I didn't get the job. There were too many people applying for it. He'll keep my details on their system, and will get in touch if anything else comes up. I said okay, no problem, but said to myself 'I'd really liked to be interviewed by yourself face-to-face when I came to your place so that I could see your reaction to me (with the Hijab and Muslim appearance)'. That was the only time I'd been exposed to that sort of thing. I would have loved to see that man in my second interview when I got to their place, but it was a woman I hadn't seen before so I can't say exactly what would have happened.

One female university graduate, however, cites work experience rather than racism as the main barrier she encountered when looking for a job after leaving university. Her comments below also help to illustrate some of the

difficulties young Somali people face in translating their education into employment:

At the beginning it was very difficult finding a job. I was unemployed for 6 to 8 months just being at home and not working. I did many interviews, sometimes you didn't even hear back from them, you didn't hear back from application forms. It was just a case of keep applying because I knew somebody would eventually give me a job. I found it difficult to secure a job after I graduated, as a lot of the jobs required you to have work experience but nobody would give you a chance. Sometimes, to get work experience you had to have prior interest which basically meant you needed to have work experience just to get work experience which is ridiculous. ... There will always be people who don't like you for various reasons, but I genuinely think my lack of work experience was the main barrier preventing me from getting a job. I did hear from people saying it was because I'm black, because I wear a scarf but to be honest I felt those to be just excuses and you just have to give everything you have trying to get a job. The jobs I didn't get I'm guessing there were more preferable candidates...there were some jobs I thought maybe they were discriminating against me...my sister, before she did her current course in law, she thought a lot of her friends had connections with judges and that option isn't available for us...that's just the way things are.

Deeqa (27, Editorial Assistant working for a publishing firm in London)

In all, the evidence here reveals that most young people aspire to university (and beyond) because, in their view, it is only through higher education that relatively secure employment with good incomes are attainable. That may be true, but there is also a downside to this. Most prior work on this topic demonstrates that black and ethnic minority communities in the UK continue to face 'ethnic penalties' in the labour market (Carter 2003; Heath & Cheung 2006). These penalties include employer discrimination; a lack of knowledge of the job opportunities available; the type of skills attained (or lack thereof); and few established employer networks (see National Skills Forum 2010; National Audit Office 2008). The Somali young people in this research (and beyond) now have to contend with a so-called 'Muslim Penalty' added to this list (see, for instance, Open Society Institute 2004, 2005; Bunglawala 2010).

Resilience in the face of pervasive hazards ⁽²⁸⁾

London is a tough place to grow up and many of the young people in the research (and their families) faced significant hazards, ranging from prejudice against their ethnic group to the prevalence of drug use and violence in their neighborhoods (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

I ought to caveat the above statement with a reminder that this study has not examined the extent to which Somali young people in the project may have experienced racial discrimination and prejudice (compare Kasinitz et al., 2008). I also did not ask my respondents about 'what their parents might have taught them regarding race, prejudice, and discrimination' (ibid., p. 304) in the knowledge that a full exposition of these issues is beyond the scope of the thesis. Instead, I draw on reports of various incidents of inter-racial violence and harassments given by the young people or their parents along with their perceptions of these events. I also draw on reports of delinquent youth groups and street gangs narrated both by the parents and the young people. Fuller details of these reports can also be found in their stories (see Chapters 4-6).

Muhibo Aden and her 6 children were housed by a borough in South London as they arrived from Somalia in January 1995. But trouble started soon after they moved into their Council accommodation. Their new neighbours did not take kindly to their presence, and gave them a cold welcome. Racist taunts, threats, and physical violence became the order of the day as gangs of young people congregated outside her house to cause trouble: "they were kids from the neighbours... there was a boy who acted as the gang-leader. He will bring with him up to 6, 7, 8 kids. Throughout June, we were attacked. It was like an attack month for us. (we were) stoned non-stop". The police and the local authority intervened, and the family had had a brief respite from the harassments.

That did not last long, however, as the attacks soon returned in a nastier form. One night, there was a serious incident that could have resulted in significant injury or even loss of life when teenage arsonists set fire to a disused garage beneath Muhibo's house at about midnight, forcing the family and people in neighbouring homes to flee. Muhibo and some of her children were still awake when they noticed smoke filling up their house. Fire crews were called to tackle the blaze. Luckily no one was injured and all the people in the estate at the time were rescued safely from the building. Because the fire has left the building unsafe, it was considered too much of a risk to leave people in their homes in case the structure collapsed. Muhibo's family had to stay with relatives for almost four months until extensive renovations were carried out in the building.

Despite these attacks, Muhibo and her family stayed put in their accommodation. She says she had refused to be cowed by the local thugs. These were unruly white boys who caused us a lot of trouble, she says. In the end, and as a result of a series of court actions, the white youth gangs and their families were evicted from the estate. Muhibo took part in many of these court actions as a prosecution witness. The estate has now become a place where several different races and ethnic groups live together, and Muhibo says they feel completely at ease in it.

During my second interview with her in Feb. 2009, Muhibo's older son (Qatar, 20) was held in a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) for 'drug related offences'. He was imprisoned in July 2007 and was due to be released in the middle of 2009. Muhibo blames the social context they encountered in the estate where drugs, gang activities, and other elements of "street" culture were common. She says her son was exposed to the behaviours of these youths, and ended up doing all manner of foul deeds like them.

Hussein was another parent whose family settled in North London upon arrival in the mid 90s. Having raised a big family of 10 (some of them grown up now), he talked about "crime, drugs and other social problems associated

with a poor neighbourhood” as the main challenges that confronted them. His second eldest son, Kassim (21), had joined up the local gang, dropped out of school, and then started committing serious offences on a regular basis. He was eventually sent back to Somalia by his parents ‘to save him from ending up dead in the street’.

I conducted a long distance telephone conversation with Kassim himself who was in Somalia in the middle of February 2009, and this is what he had to say about his past in London:

“I saw some of my friends end up in the street, sleeping rough. I saw others who’ve become mad. Some have killed themselves. Some ended up in prison. As a young man living in London, either you work or go college, or you end up in the street and become a gang member. ... Once you develop bad friendships, the only option you have is to leave the country because there is no way you can escape from your bad friends ... Many of the kids are in these situations, and you can see a lot of them hanging in the streets or in the parks, are enslaved by their gang masters. They’re being fed hash and other drugs, and they’re then trained to follow orders. The child goes to the park first to play football, but once gang masters get their hands on him, feed him drugs and train him, he forgets all about football, school or college and even his family. That is the end of his life. I saw too many kids in that situation. The gang members have rank and file; they’ve got generals, lieutenants, sergeants, and soldiers. The soldiers are the retainers who’re sent around to do mean things. You heard those children in Camden who killed the young boy. They were in a gang, and all of them ended up in prison. The children were each given 5 years imprisonment, and the older boys were gaoled for life (with a minimum tariff of) 13 to 14 years. I left before these things happened.”

The young boy killed in Camden that Kassim referred to was 18-year-old Mahir Osman, a mechanical engineering student, who was attacked by a gang of 40 youths in a busy London high street in January 2006. Mr. Osman was punched, stamped on and stabbed 20 times by the youths carrying wooden bats, bottles, hammers and knives. The gang took less than a minute to kill him, according to a CCTV footage shown at the trial of his assailants in the Old Bailey. The attack had been the culmination of escalating violence involving two Somali gangs from Camden and the

Tottenham-Edmonton area (for more details, see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/6358975.stm>).

At least one other young man in my group, Jidhaan (25), admits to serious offending, such as carrying weapons, committing street robberies and selling drugs. He says he was imprisoned twice. On the first occasion, he was arrested for his involvement in a fight 'while carrying a knife'. He doesn't say whether a stabbing had occurred in the fight or not, but tells me that he was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. He was jailed at Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Feltham where he spent two years of his 4 year sentence, and was released on licence. On the second occasion, he was arrested for 'vehicle theft.' He tells me that he was only a passenger in the car when it was stopped by the police. He was given a 3 month jail term, and was sent to Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Aylesbury. He says he can't remember the dates of these custodial sentences but the last time he was in prison was in 2001, when he got arrested for the vehicle theft. If that is the case, then Jidhaan's involvement with crime would have been a short and passing phase of his mid-teen life, with few serious consequences. I am afraid the evidence in his present position does not support that optimism. With criminal records and no obvious qualifications, this young man clearly had difficulty finding jobs.

While a few young men joined the gangs for the thrill and the temptation of crime and perhaps found in them 'a feeling of belonging and sanctuary' (Kasinitz et al., 2008:126), others resisted but with profound consequences to themselves and their families. Mahad (22), a young man living in North London, was a case in point. He declined to join a local group of boys who were threatening people in the estate and who (he thought) were involved in criminal activities. Then they started harassing and taunting himself and other members of his family. But that was only the start. One evening, a group of hooded young men (mainly black and Turkish), shouting racial abuse, raided his family house with metal bars and baseball bats. They broke down the door and started smashing up the furniture downstairs.

Mahad, who was upstairs at the time playing games with his friend, jumped from a second floor window to escape them. His friend hid in a cupboard. The assailants racially abused Mahad's shocked mum and sisters who were in the kitchen before running away. They left behind a trail of broken glass and furniture wreckage strewn across the floor in the hall-way, kitchen and living room. Apart from Mahad who sustained multiple, but minor, fractures to one foot and badly bruised his arms, legs and back, no one else got injured. The police have moved the family for their safety, and they had to stay away from their home for the next two months. Mahad and his family are convinced it is the same youths who were responsible, but claim the police have not done enough to catch these thugs. It took Mahad nearly 3 months of rest and physiotherapy before making a full recovery and being able to return to normality.

How scared are these young people, especially the boys, of the gang culture, violence and criminality that is prevalent in some of the areas they live is perhaps best illustrated by a comment made by Kassim's older brother, Zaki (23). Asked as to how he would define success for someone of his age, this is what he had to say:

"I would define success in this way. If you can avoid everything around you that is negative [growing up] in a bad neighbourhood. If you can avoid all those bad influences, I will consider that as success."

One young man, Said (21), thinks people are biased against Somali boys. Somali girls have no problem, he says, but people and the White community in particular consider Somali boys to be a threat to society. This is how he puts it: "The girls are alright, but the boys –*Gaalada* [White people] think that they're (Somali boys) trouble makers and that they're not trustable. Especially the police and them lot, they don't seem to like the Somalis. So I think it is hard for a Somalian, from age 17 to 42. [They think] Somalis are hypocrites or trouble makers (sic). They're in gang or they don't wanna do nothing with their life or something like that. That is not a good position to be in. I think it is very hard for the Somali boys."

Somali young people also encounter widespread racial prejudice in the streets, according to Said. This comes not only from White people but also from fellow African and black people. I asked Said whether he experienced 'racism' himself, and this is what he had to say: "I have seen and experienced it myself. I have seen people be racist because someone is Somalian and then they act racist against them. Not now but long time ago, like three years ago. Somalians in this area, they didn't used to like the Africans and West Africans so they used to fight each other: "You fucking Somalian," "Fucking Nigerian", this and that. ... Now it is like the white people and the police and the general public which is the white community, they have a certain hypocrite view of the Somali youth. ... So that is what I see; that is the trouble these days."

Said also alleges that Somalis are particularly being stereotyped 'as people who are doing no good in society' by the police: "In London the Somalis are seen as, not trouble makers, but from the police's side, that they're doing no good in society. Somali boys are always up to no good; that is what they say. They're stereotyped that they're gangs and this and that. And I have watched this on TV as well. So everyone has a certain bad stereotype (image) of Somalian in this British society, especially the boys."

Said paints a picture of Somalis living in areas where violence and anti-social behaviour are commonplace. Both Somalis and other black people living in these areas face generalized negative and discriminatory attitudes, according to Said. In his own words: "I'd say there is discrimination towards the black people and there is stereotyping, basically hoody, gangs, street corners, the knife problem which is in the headlines now, and this and that. You have to watch out because if you get into a fight, you never know what (might happen?). The opposition might have a knife, he can stab you, or he may have a gun or anything. So you need to be very careful. ... When you're walking on the street, you have to know who's behind you, who is in front of you. You can't just walk; you have to be on guard."

It must be said here that most girls in the research seemed relatively unaffected by these issues and unconcerned about them. A few girls reported incidents of verbal bullying at school, and headscarfs being snatched from them by other students. One young woman, Samiya (21), mentioned being teased about piracy in Somalia by fellow students at university. One day, a friend came up to her and said: “How you doing, pirate?”, and that was because all the news about Somalia was to do with pirates, she says. Samiya described those exchanges as good-natured banter.

But there were also reports of Somali female to Somali female prejudice over dress code. A young Somali woman (let us call her Aziza) who was a friend of one of my interviewees complained of harassment by several Somali girls in her neighbourhood because she wears “Western” clothes. Aziza is 22, has a good job and also goes to university. Although she still dons her headscarf, she also wears jeans and skirts instead of the loose-fitting traditional clothes worn by Somali women. She talks of a particular Somali family in the neighbourhood whose girls used to go to school with her. In those days, she says, these girls were friendly and they would all play together in the park. Sometime later, their father came over from Somalia and then things changed. The girls became more religious and started wearing the *hijab*, covering everything except the hands and face. They asked Aziza to do likewise, but she refused. Since then, she says, they have adopted a disapproving and hostile attitude towards her. They also avoid speaking or dealing with her completely. This may also be emanating from a feeling of envy towards her because the girls apparently have no jobs and also do not go to college whereas Aziza has a lot going for her.

A few female respondents thought the media was continually advancing an increasingly negative discourse about the Somali community. Here is Samiya:

“Every time you see anything on the news or the internet, it is about pirates. ... You

never see no good stuff that they do. Like, I know of loads of people, not loads but a number, who send money to Somalia not only to their families, but to people who are sick in hospital. I see people sending money to orphanages and other causes, and you never see these good works publicised by the media. They talk about Islamic terrorists, etc. always in a negative light. ... Personally it doesn't affect me. But I don't like it, and (especially) when I never hear about the good stuff."

Samiya quickly adds that the Somalis, in a way, deserve this because they got nothing better to offer to the rest of the world:

"And we're not very like known for anything else. Moroccans are known for their food. All other Islamic countries are known for something. And us what are we known for? What is our trade that we're different from all the other African countries? I know we have piracy which isn't a very nice trade; and warlordism, and all that stuff. So we're not known for any nice stuff".

For Maandeeq (20), these prejudices are whipped up by the media because Somali boys are engendering negative beliefs about the community by their behaviours:

"I think the Somali people have already established their own identity in Britain. They're coming up, doing their own jobs and making a life for themselves just as Asian people do. But I think on the news they're coming up to have a certain opinion of us. I don't think it is all positive because I think the Somali boys are doing a lot of representation for us, and I don't think it is in a good way. I think there are a lot of boys who are bored and just trying to seek money and violent really. ... All we see is this stuff on the news, and it is not all good."

What both Saamiya and Maandeeq seem to be saying is that the actions of a small group of boys who are doing bad things in society confirms people's preexisting negative beliefs or prejudices about the Somali community. People then apply these stereotypical generalizations to other young Somali people. This may or may not be true but coming to terms with group stereotypes, according to Jeremy Hein (2006:184), "is an inevitable part of immigrants' racial and ethnic adaptation."

In all, Somali families cluster in inner city areas. In these environments, as illustrated above, their young people are exposed to norms of behavior inimical to mobility, and to lifestyles and attitudes that reinforce these behaviours (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2006). While many of my respondents were exposed to such hazards, some were more resistant to damage than others, especially when family resources helped them (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005). For a significant minority of young men, however, the activities of gangs, sale of drugs, and other elements of “street culture” amounted to an alternative path of adaptation, away from school and homework and in direct opposition to their parents’ expectations (compare Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Some parents have, in fact, become so distraught at what they saw as the permissiveness of British culture and the specific threats posed by inner-city drugs, crime and “gang culture” (The Centre for Social Justice 2009) that they have taken to sending their children back home to be educated in the care of grandparents or other kin. That is the issue that I shall deal with first, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

SOMALI YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE

TRAJECTORIES INTO

ADULTHOOD

PART III

This chapter covers the last two themes drawn from the interviews with young people, namely *transnationalism* and *ideas about success*. Transnationalism in this research mainly refers to a phenomenon whereby some of the families in the sample have sent some of their children back to Somalia partly for cultural and religious education reasons, but also in an attempt to get them out of a negative environment in London. The last section, *Ideas about success*, attempts to examine young people's views and aspirations about their future. Their responses, captured through open-ended questioning and in-depth interviews, reflect values and decisions on their part about 'what is important to them, what they want to achieve in their lives, and how best to go about reaching their goals' (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:87). The *Conclusion* at the end of the chapter will provide a summary of the analysis of all the themes covered in chapters 5, 6, & 7.

Transnationalism

Ewa Morawska (2007:149) proposes two different interpretations of the word "transnationalism." In the first one, transnationalism is understood as a shift beyond or, as it were, vertically past (rather than horizontally across) membership in a territorial state or nation and its accompanying civic and

political claims, toward more encompassing definitions such as universal humanism, membership in a supracountry (e.g., the European Union), and panreligious [*perhaps we should add panethnic*] solidarity (e.g., Muslims in western Europe) [*Italics are mine*]. This approach informs, according to Morawska, studies concerned with the impact of globalization in general and international migration in particular on the prerogatives of the nation-state. In Morawska's second interpretation, transnationalism refers to some combination of plural civic and political memberships, economic involvements, social networks, and cultural identities that reach across and link people and institutions in two or more nation-states in diverse, multilayered patterns. My interest here is on immigrant transnationalism in the second meaning of the term

I cannot of course resolve the whole complex and multiplex detail of the issue of 'transnationalism' (even in its second meaning above) in this section (For an expansive coverage of its terminology, ambiguity of definition and conceptual distinctions, see Levitt & Jaworsky 2007). Nor do I want to, as this clearly goes beyond the remit of my thesis. Instead, my aim here is to provide evidence for a more limited form of transnationalism, particularly as it pertains to (a) parents sending their children "back home" for part of their education, and for 'social and cultural learning infused with religious values' (Levitt 2007:64); (b) parents sending or taking their children "back home" to get them out of a negative environment in the host country (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:53); (c) parents taking or sending an unruly child "back home" because they believe younger siblings are clearly at risk of learning from him and moving into the same lifestyle as him (two parents acknowledged having done this); and (d) parents creating social networks and relationships across borders to maximize opportunities for their children (compare Smith 2006). I then conclude by briefly commenting on evidence I collected about 'transnational activism' (Levitt & Waters 2002:19) by the young people themselves, such as sending remittances, maintaining social contacts, interest in homeland media and politics, and visits to the home country.

The Somali community in fact has a word '*dhaqancelis* [roughly translated as *rehabilitation*]' for the return back to Somalia of a child who had some difficulty adjusting to life in the UK, mainly for a time but sometimes for good. At least 3 families in my sample have had some of their children returned to Somalia on *dhaqancelis* homeland travel to get them, in the view of their parents, out of a negative environment in London. One of these parents was Amino, a mother of three whose family lives in South London. She and her husband decided to send their eldest son, Said (21), to Somalia as soon as he finished school in 2004. He stayed with Amino's elderly mother and other relatives in Mogadishu for the next two years. In Amino's telling words: "Said fell with a wrong crowd, and wouldn't stop roaming the streets. We thought that we would lose him if we didn't bring some changes to his life, and that was why we decided to send him to Somalia. He got wiser because of the time he stayed there, but the problem was that he went back to his old group when he returned to the UK. If I could keep him apart from this group I would, but I can't. May be if we moved to another area, he might lose contact with them. But we can't afford to move to another area." In fact what has become of Said propelled Amino and her husband to take their two younger children (a boy of 16, and a girl of 19) to North Africa to complete their schooling, and not end up in the same way as their older brother.

Awralo was another mother who sent her youngest daughter, Weris (23), to Somalia after she finished school. Weris has spent some years in Somalia, but the accounts of Awralo and her daughter's are inconsistent. In the words of Awralo, "My daughter was big enough when she decided to return (to Somalia). She first went to a ... *Middle Eastern country*, and then moved to Somalia. When she go there, she liked the place. I also wanted her to get to know about her heritage culture and country ... that she gets to know the traditions and the culture of our home country, and it was all a success." For Weris, the story of her return to Somalia and her presence in Mogadishu for several years raises troubling questions. Nonetheless, she'd overcome

most of the difficulties related to her stay in Somalia and has embarked on a path of personal development and educational advancement upon returning to the UK.

Hussein Waasuge had his second eldest son, Kassim (now aged 21), sent back to Somalia because he “dropped out of school ... [and started] getting involved with gangs”. The father now very much regrets having had to make that decision because Kassim “found (in Somalia) unlimited freedom, and there was no one telling him off. He did whatever he wanted to do and more, and had learned a lot from bad people in there at a time when he was young and very vulnerable. People out there preyed on him. Here was a young man who couldn’t speak that much Somali and was mainly speaking English. They took advantage of him, and that was a very big mistake on my part.”

When Kassim was brought back to London after a few years, he went straight back to his old friends and resumed his ‘delinquent and criminal behaviour’. Thus he had again been returned to Somalia, this time ‘for good’. Hussein reports that Kassim’s latest return to Somalia was a choice made by Kassim himself as opposed to the earlier travels which were initiated and encouraged by the parents. The father says Kassim has changed and because of that the family has generously supported him. Kassim now has a wife and 3 children, and is said to be working as a farmer in Somalia.

Hussein’s eldest son Zaki (23), who too was shipped off to Somalia before finishing school, found it difficult to adjust to college life upon his return to the UK. He puts this down to the disruption caused to his education: “I didn’t do my GCSEs. I was supposed to finish school in 2003, but I didn’t stay in school because I was sent back to Somalia.” Although the sojourn was clearly disruptive to him, Zaki puts a positive gloss on his time in Somalia: “I consider myself actually much more experienced and wiser than I was before I went to Somalia. I’ve got a new perspective in life now which I didn’t have before.”

Some of the young people found their stay in Somalia personally disruptive. Others, however, successfully adapted to their new (albeit difficult) situation and have done well out of the experience. Girls were more likely to readjust successfully to their lives back in the UK. Boys, on the other hand, fell back under the influence of old friends whose association caused them to be taken or sent back to Somalia in the first place.

While some of the parents insisted that they would still send back their child on *dhaqancelis* if they believed that indiscipline had a major impact on his or her life in the UK, most of the young people interviewed had a negative view of this purported solution, and many saw it as punishment rather than corrective. Su'ad (21), a female university student, spoke for many on this issue:

"Because I don't think there is (any good) in Somalia. You gonna send your child to somewhere, I am talking about Somalia, where they got *Khat* which is a drug. They've got abandoned children; they've got warlords; you can get your child kidnapped and then your child could get worse in there because also you're not with them. You just gonna send one child by him or herself to a different country. I don't think its gonna help. They're gonna come back either worser (sic) or in a bad way or, you know, emotionally wrecked."

Taking the children to Somalia during school holidays was another method that some of the families used to 'maintain ties to the parents' culture and homeland' (Levitt & Waters 2002:17). At least 4 families have reported to have engaged in these trips, and the children had frequently accompanied their parents on these visits. Some of my young respondents described emotional moments of feeling connected to the country as they arrived. They said the trip had brought them closer to their parents, and also made them more appreciative and understanding of the cultural traditions and practices with which they had been raised. For this group, the homeland trips fostered not only a greater empathy for their parents and relatives, but also gave them a certain sense of belonging in Somalia (compare Kibria 2002).

For others, however, these homeland trips were marked by experiences of being seen and treated as “different” by the local people. Language was an especially important issue in the experience of this difference. Even if these young people were able to blend in with the locals owing to their physical characteristics, their inability to speak the language or to speak it in expected ways was clearly a central concern. They also found themselves distinguished by cultural mannerisms – dress, demeanor, and so forth (*ibid.*, p. 306).

Nawal (20), a female university student, provides a typical example of this experience. Rather than fostering a sense of affinity, the trip had given her a sense of bitterness about her Somali heritage:

“It actually added on to my identity crisis. I thought I was going to feel at home in Somalia but that wasn’t the case. People would call us ‘the British girls’ ... not in a malicious way. But we’re not British, we’re Somali. They would also say ‘your Somali is kind of funny’. It made me feel more detached from Somalia and the Somali culture.”

There were also several cases where families felt that their children weren’t doing particularly well at school or that they weren’t making the progress the parents expected them to make, who then decided to take them out of the UK to a third country. By a third country, I mean a country other than Britain and Somalia. These parents felt that they exhausted local options here in the UK, but that they weren’t prepared to send their children to Somalia – a place they viewed a hopeless mess that offers no hope to them.

Because Somali people are becoming increasingly ‘diasporic’ (see Sheffer 2007:65)²⁹ with considerable ‘trans-state networks’ (compare Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004), these parents already had transnational ties to the countries where they wanted to send or take their children for educational visits. Again, Amino (the mother of 3 already mentioned above) was one of these parents. She took her two younger children, Iftin (f, 19) and Olow (m, 16), to a country in North Africa because they weren’t achieving much at school in the UK. Her husband’s sister and other relatives and friends were

already living in that country when Amino and her children joined them in 2005. Some of the friends and relatives were, Like Amino, from the UK and had taken their children there for similar purposes. These people had acted as a link with for Amino and her children. Amino's children were enrolled in a local private college close to where their aunt was living. Her daughter retook her GCSEs and also undertook her A level courses, returning to the UK with superb A level qualifications. Iftin went on to gain a place at a top London University. Her brother gained very good GCSE grades and had also returned to the UK for his further education.

Abdi I. Sharraawe was another parent who took two of his younger children (a girl aged 16, and a boy of 9) to East Africa in 2009, and enrolled them in a top private school. Abdi had at the beginning of the 1990s invested some money into a business started up by his own brother in East Africa. The brother and his family were earlier rescued from the civil war in Somalia by Abdi himself who paid for their relocation in East Africa. The business grew big, and the brother was now in a position to return the favor by paying for the education of Abdi's children in East Africa. Abdi's wife, whom I spoke to when I began to write up his story in Sep. 2009, says that the children themselves were surprised about the level of knowledge and learning at the institution they joined up. She also tells me that Abdi is preparing to come back to the UK to take the remaining two children, a girl of 13 and a boy of 11, with him back to East Africa to be educated alongside those already there.

Hussein Guure Waasge (also mentioned above) felt restless and dissatisfied about the position of some of his children, especially the boys. His verdict was thus: "Youths growing up in the UK scorn traditional morals, are lazy and do not want to make a success of themselves". Hussien told me about the story of several Somali people he knew whose children were studying medicine in China and India. He says higher education in those countries was reasonably cheap, and effective. The young people themselves will do their utmost once placed in such a tough environment. Hussein plans to take one of his sons, Bashar (18), this summer (2009) to India for university

education. He says Bashar is a test case for him and if he becomes a success, he will seriously consider sending most of the others after him.

One other case of peculiar transnationalism deserves a mention. This is the case of Muhibo Aden and her daughter, Fahmo (21), living in South London. At some point after leaving school, according to her mother, there was a huge change in Fahmo. The likeable normal girl she knew became inactive, isolated and detached. She took refuge in watching TV, physically deteriorated and lost appetite. Forget about taking up courses or getting a job, according to her mum, Fahmo was basically unable to take care of her own physical wellbeing. At that point, the mother decided to take Fahmo on holidays abroad for rest and relaxation, and to give her a break from whatever problems she's had in London. Fahmo was taken to these holidays on at least four occasions. Whenever she came back to the UK, she'd be stronger than when she left and would be more in control of her own life, for a time. But then after a few weeks or months, she'd start idling the hours away and return to her oldself. Muhibo's hope is that her daughter will, one day, leap forward to take control of her situation.

Muhibo makes an indirect reference to some financial help she received from family and friends abroad to pay for these travels. She tells me that, like Abdi Sharraawe above, she and her three elder daughters in the UK helped financially several of her brothers and their families, as the civil wars raged in Somalia, to relocate to Southern Africa in the 1990s. They then sponsored business enterprises for these relatives in Southern Africa. The relatives themselves have sponsored many more people from Somalia into Southern Africa over the years, and their businesses have gone from strength to strength. Muhibo says her brothers have returned her initial investment many times over, and that they have been a huge help to herself and her daughter during their recent travels abroad.

According to R. Smith (2006), the term transnational life includes those practices and relationships that link migrants and their children with the

home country. What we see above, however, are transnational ties operating across a variety of 'geographic, cultural and political borders' (Basch et al. 1994:7), and not merely between societies of origin and settlement. This fact accords with Morawska's (2007) definition of transnationalism in the second meaning of the term above.

While acknowledging the salience of transnational ties for the first generation, some researchers argue that such ties might decline among their children (see Portes et al., 1999; Lucassen 2006). Others say the ability of today's migrants to sustain transnational ties is unprecedented. The speed of travel and the importance of communication technologies are new and important developments in this context (see Kasinitz et al., 2002:99).

Many of the young people in this research reported that they and their parents have sent regular remittances to Somalia, and that they maintain regular social contact with relatives and family members through telephone, email, and so on. Asked about the remittances she sent, one young woman had a sharp retort: "I just sent my whole student grant for this month to relatives in Mogadishu," adding: "Especially because I have been in Somalia and met a lot of relatives, so there are constant phone calls to me as well (as mum) saying "have you forgotten us" to which I reply "no, I am just a student" (Weris, 23, Student Nurse).

These young people were well informed about the current situation in Somalia, the burgeoning Somali-run internet media being their primary source. Nearly everyone said that they would be the first to move permanently to Somalia were peace to break in that country again. All were fluently bilingual and, of course, language plays a critical role in the maintenance of transnational ties (Kasinitz et al., 2002), and many experienced what Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008:371) called "the transnationalism of the heart."

Besides, their parents' yearning for the old country and involvement in

transnational ties, and the fact that they are growing up in a context infused with homeland values and behaviours strongly affect their life trajectories. They may become more transnationally active as a result, or they may come to new ways of thinking about their place in the United Kingdom (compare Levitt & Waters 2002).

Ideas about success

Young people's views and opinions about what is important in life were captured in some of the open-ended questions I asked in the study, namely: (1) People measure success in different ways; how would you define success for someone of your age? (2) What would you like to be doing in 10 years time? (3) What do you think is more important for a young person like you – getting married and having a family or finding a job, or are both equally important? (4) Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person? (5) Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a woman as they are for a man?

Respondents used very different frameworks, set themselves different goals, and mentioned different priorities for reaching those goals (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005). However, the majority aspired to 'conventional success goals: academic success, self-efficacy, and employment in the formal labour market, etc.' (see Elliott et al., 2006:289). Earning your living by doing an honest day's work, and not becoming reliant on benefits were some of the statements made:

.. for me, that is someone in university. Someone that is got a job of their own and not on benefits. Someone renting their own house when they're old enough, not applying for Council houses. Basically someone that is trying to get an honest living. I think if you made it to university, you become successful in my eyes. And you got a good degree as well, not just a pass. (Iftin, f, 19).

I measure success by graduating from university, and getting a job, preferably one that is related to the subject they studied in university and really being able to contribute to society. (Adil, m, 25).

I'd say success is to have a degree and to get a job. Well, actually to be honest, a degree is not a 100% necessary. But if they have a good job and they come off the benefits and they're earning to make an honest living and are contributing to society in a positive way, I'd call that a success. (Guure, m, 20).

One young woman decided that success had to do with having enough money and being financially independent:

For a young person of my age in this society - a capitalist society, it is all about the money ... independence and financial security. I think that is the foundation of success (Weris, f, 23).

Success to a young Somali man in London is that he is able to do a job and have a regular source of livelihood. He ought to be engaged in activity and work hard and that is achieving success, according to Dr. Guuleed - himself a young Somali man and a hospital registrar. Guuleed is critical of Somali parents, saying that they have unreasonable expectations of their children:

I think success for a young Somali male in this country is someone who has a stable life. When I speak to parents ... couple of times I've been asked to speak to the children by a Somali community project in Camden, I used to say to them: "Do whatever you want to do in life, and not everyone has to go to university". So in Somali success means going to university, but in this country success means having a stable job. I think being a plumber is 100 times better than being an IT person who hasn't got a job. Someone goes to university and has a degree in IT but doesn't have a job, that person is not successful as compared to someone who at the age of 18 went to college and did two years plumbing course and now has a stable job and a stable family. That (the latter) person is successful. So I think to have a stable job, whatever that job is really doesn't matter, is important. I think Somali parents have inappropriate expectations of their children being a doctor or an engineer. That is not the only way to success. (Dr. Guuleed, m, 27).

A few of the girls mentioned marriage as part of their definition of success. Among these were two sisters who have yet to go to university:

I would say that they are successful if they have good education, being married with children, and have a good job. (Nafiso, f, married with a child, 26).

If you have an education and you're married, and with a good job then you're successful. (Dahabo, 24, sister of Nafiso).

To have a job they enjoy, to have some sort of financial independence, maybe have a partner and looking towards settling down...seeing a bit of the world, doing something for yourself not just everybody else...obviously priorities change as well depending on your circumstances. (Deeqa, female university graduate, 27).

One young man defined success as avoiding trouble with the law:

If they made it through their teenage years without having any criminal record or without having any confrontations with the police. If they're clean in terms of civil disputes, then I'd define that as being successful. (Farhan, m, 25).

Several respondents (all women) have emphasized spiritual (rather than material) values and personal responsibility. True success, they say, encompasses a balance of personal and professional effectiveness. One must have a sense of purpose, manage their time well, think positively, and let their conscience be their guide:

I think [success is] the amount of people you're affecting in a positive way. Because money, wealth, and qualifications are not enough. ... (Having) a lot of qualifications doesn't mean that I am successful; it doesn't mean that I am a good person. But I think if can help people in a positive way ... that is a measurable success. (Su'ad, f, 21).

I know people think of material wealth or qualifications, or how many kids they have, but I think success has to do with how connected you find within yourself. I think loads of people are unable to be by themselves. So I think to be able to be in a room by yourself and to think of no problems, and to be happy in whatever you do that is a success for me. (Saamiya, f, 21).

To be successful at the age of twenty would probably mean that you know where life is headed. Just know where your life is going and to have a good time because twenty is still an early time in your life. To have a set goal in life even if you're not in university at the time, just to have a good idea of where things are going, and to have your morals in check, to have your religion, and still going strongly, and to

have your parents always behind you, and to have a stable family supporting you. (Maandeeq, f, 20).

In answer to the question 'What would you like to be doing in 10 years time?', most respondents again mention gaining a university qualification, a job, money, being married, and having kids. There was no gender difference in respondents' long-term outlook for marriage and kids:

I don't know. A job, be married, kids. ... Well, if I say I want to have my own practice, I can't really say that. I can't also say I won't have kids because I want to do work and family life balance, and the majority of people will have kids by then ... (Saamiya, f, 21).

I would like to have a stable job, and to have married and have a family. That is about it really. With a job, everything should be nice. (Said, m, 21)

I'll be 33 then. I would be working for a number of years. Hopefully, I'd have formed a family by then. At 33, I'd have my 2nd child, laughter. And yes, I'll be working and looking after a family, part-time mum and part-time worker. ... I'd like to spend a lot of time with my children so yes doing part-time work. In 10 years time, I'd want to be living comfortably. (Weris, f, 23).

In 10 years time, I'd like to have had a job for a few years. Probably already married and living at my own house with a good job. And if there are any children, that will also be good. (Guure, m, 20).

Ten years time! I am thirty. ... I should have finished my education, and probably have a job, a part-time job or something; hopefully married (with) first or second child (Maandeeq, f, 20).

A young female nurse, who works at a large teaching hospital, doesn't view herself as a success because she says she still wants to advance towards a higher or better stage in medicine by becoming a doctor:

I don't see myself as successful, I think I'm average...I would say I'm slightly successful as I graduated from high school, college and university and I landed a good job. I'm successful in terms of achieving what I've wanted but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop here, there's still lots of things I want to achieve...this is just a stepping stone, I'm still climbing up the success ladder. So in ten years time I would like to become either a cardiologist or gynaecologist. I've got another 4 years

of education to go; I want to train as a medical doctor. I don't know whether to study it now or to wait a while, but I'll study it full time, it would be difficult studying medicine part time as it would take longer and it'd be harder. (Zahra, f, 24).

Several young men had great and confident expectations for their future:

In ten years time, I see myself completing my university degree, being active in the business world whether I am setting up my own business or working for a big corporation as an accountant or financial ... (executive). I also see myself as having a family and kids, and hopefully back home. (Mahad, m, 22)

At the moment, I want to be a legal officer in the next five years; it is something I am aiming towards. First I want to qualify as an advisor for CAB, and work there for three years. With that experience I can then apply to become a legal officer in the next five to seven years. I've got entrepreneurial skills, and I see a huge value in business, once I'm financially stable I'd like to get into property investment not only in this country, but possibly back in Somalia and other places. In the next 10 years I'd like to become a businessman but before then there are other things I need to do. (Farhan, m, 25).

In 10 years time I definitely see myself in a managerial position. I also plan to do my master this September abroad, there is a course I'd like to do which consists of 3 universities located in different areas of Europe (Italy, Spain and Sweden) and you'll study on each campus for 6 months. The course is a year and a half, and it is an internationally recognised Master's degree in investment management. Alternatively, I'd like to do my Master's in America or Canada also in Industrial management...I'm definitely interested in the industrial of management. In 10 years time I see myself managing a steel company or a construction company. (Adil, m, 25).

To the question "What do you think is more important for a young person like you – getting married and having a family or finding a job?", virtually everyone (including even those who were married) said that they would want to delay marriage until they have completed their education and have made a start in their chosen career. Girls in particular mentioned the need to be educated first so that as a parent one can help their children with school subjects later in life. Other respondents took a perspective of history and talked about Somali traditional marriage and family formation, and the older generations' views on the topic. But they all came to the same conclusion

that it was far more preferable to delay marriage because of such factors as economic necessity or a desire to complete one's education. A sample of these responses is in order:

If it was back in Somalia, it would probably be the marriage that comes first. But here in the UK ... You have to provide for your family, and be able to pay your bills. There is a lot of pressure on you. You have to have a stable job; something nice coming in on weekly or monthly basis. (Said, m, 21).

Right now, I'd say getting an education and finding a good job is important to me because I don't think I can help my children if I haven't got an education. I know how hard it was for me when I was young. It would have helped if my parents understood more about the school education system. (Iftin, f, 19).

I would say definitely gaining qualifications is more important than having a family or getting married. I am talking from experience here as somebody who got married first with the interruption that that caused to my training. (Nafiso, f, 26, married with a child).

For me, it is very important that I get a good job. Having a family is of low priority for me now because when I finish my studies and get a good job, it will then be easier to support my family and kids in the future. But I think to say I'd go into marriage first, well that suits some people and some people can't do better but for me it will be hard not knowing my financial situation and what I can afford in terms of having a wife and kids, and a house and especially in the current economic atmosphere. So I'd say getting a good job would be the basis upon which to build my family because I want to give my kids what I didn't have. (Mahad, m, 22).

From a parents or the older generation's perspective, their priorities are different from me or my Somali friends. Our priorities are actually the opposite of our parents'. I think our priority is trying to establish a career and once stabilised, you can think of having a family. ... Raising children and having a family is expensive. ... for your children to succeed you need to give them a good education, and this is linked to your financial capacity. Otherwise, if you're having children and a family for the sake of having them, then you may not have the capabilities to provide for them. I may think of settling down in 5 years or so. (Farhan, m, 25).

I think there's a time for everything in your life. I think it's important for a young person to establish themselves...getting a job is important, you need to stand on your own two feet and become self sufficient before you can take on any other

commitments. I think marriage and children are important but there is a time for everything. In your early to mid twenties, you should focus on yourself, to become self sufficient, to study and work... [so] if you're a young person a job should come first. (Deeqa, f, 27).

Among the many themes running through young people's responses is their perception of discrimination. This was captured mainly by the question: "Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person?" Although the key phrase in the question is 'the chances of success in the UK' for a Somali compared to a British (majority white race) person, my interest here is to elicit the views of young people about discrimination or unfair treatment faced by their own ethnic group.

Waters and Kasinitz (2010:103) argue that when people think about the role racism plays in their lives and the lives of people around them, it is usually discrimination that they're thinking about. Discrimination need not actually be experienced to play a role in ethnic and racial identity (*ibid.*, p. 104). There is a large literature, based largely on African Americans, arguing that the anticipation of discrimination and racism can have its own effects (*ibid.*). What is less well established, according to these authors, is how the children of immigrants of colour learn to anticipate and cope with discrimination (*ibid.*, p. 104).

Likewise, racism and discrimination continues in Britain in spite of successive race relations legislation (1965; 1968; 1976; 2000) as well as the Macpherson Report (1999) on the murder of Stephen Lawrence which identified 'institutional racism' at the heart of policing (Bloch & Solomos 2010:215). So the question is, how did the young people in this research view their position? Did they think that belonging to an ethnic minority group (Somali) was a distinct disadvantage in the UK? Or did they think that while racial prejudice was still alive, it is far from the monolithic barrier it used to be in the old days? (see Waters & Kasinitz 2010:103). My respondents' answers were a mixed bag, and I present a selection here:

I would say it's in the region of about 80 to 90 %. One has to understand that's it's not ever 100% and one cannot delude themselves into thinking that. Because there is that 20% favouring the British person, naturally you also have to consider it's nothing racist, but one has to work twice as hard to overcome that. Either way I think that as long as people realise if they work hard and put effort into things they can succeed, that would help them. Even if the percentages were more disproportionate, and you think there's no point in trying, then you've let yourself down. I think no matter how hard it becomes, one can always try. If you don't succeed in one aspect, you may succeed in other aspects. I think it's more or less similar if you put the effort, but nowadays having an Islamic name can cause more problems than someone with a regular name. Don't let yourself down even if the environment isn't helping you. (Farhan, m, 25).

I don't know ... I don't think it's 100% equal. I don't think it's due to discrimination, racism or anything like that. It's just a way of life. We have different values than they do ... an English person may have a better start to life than a Somali person, so they would have an advantage ... so obviously an employer would choose them. It all depends on your first few years of life. (Nawal, f, 20).

I think it depends on your field. If you're going into a career that relies on education, like mine, I believe it is even ground because it is all about what I know and how well I do what I do. There are a lot of British people out there who are the same as a lot of Somali people out there. When it comes to skilled work, I believe our chances are similar and that we'd be given similar opportunities. I don't believe colour or ethnicity matters. It only matters in the other kind of work areas that we see around, the ones that are not so skilled, the ones that rely on manual work, menial jobs. (Weris, f, 23).

People say they don't discriminate, but I've experienced it. When I was going through college, there was a tutor who gave me little respect, but I did not let her destroy me or distract me from what I was doing. She communicated with the British girls but not us. I could see what she was doing, and I thought at the end of the day this is not my country. I came here so I'm not going to fuss about and I'm going to work hard to get what I want. So yes, I think you have more chances of success if you're a British person always. And also the start up is different compared to a Somali person. Even if a Somali person is more qualified than the British person, they still might not get the job; they are put down due to who they are. (Fardosa, f, 20).

No, the chances to success aren't equal. We didn't have it as easy, they had better foundations. They were born and bred here, they went to pre-school, they went to nursery...it's their country. It wasn't easy for us, I had to overcome that language barrier, when I went to school I didn't know what 'no' or 'don't' meant. It all depends on the first few years of life; they had an advantage, so it doesn't make it a level playing field. A Somali can compete with a British person for the same job if they're just as qualified. Discrimination has decreased over the years but there will be a small minority who will prefer the British person purely because they're white. (Zahra, female nurse, 24).

I think in this country people are discriminated by class and postcode. If you're black, Asian, white or Somali and live in Surrey, you have the same success rate as a person from there. If you're white, black, Somali and Asian living in Newham, you have the same success rate as someone living in Newham. I think the main things people use to discriminate in this country are class and postcode, not necessarily colour. I am sure there is racism and all sorts of this and that. For example, in my field – medicine, medical schools are (competitive). 70 percent of people in medical school come from private schools, not from state schools. But in terms of the make up (of the 70% of the private students), there are black and Asian students from private schools as well as white students from private schools. So it is the school that defines whether a child goes into medicine or not, it is not the colour of their skin. And at work, I really don't see any racism in it. If you're good, people like you. If you're not good, people don't like you. ... Of course, there is racism and discrimination in some places. But these experiences are not uniform. I can talk about my own experiences. All my friends have good jobs. Their experiences are positive, and their outlooks in life are positive. On the other hand, I see other people who're always complaining about these things. (Dr. Guuleed, m, 27).

This isn't an easy question. I like to draw a distinction between a British person and an English person, because a lot of us are British, a lot of Asians are British, and people from any race can be British. So I think the competition amongst other British people isn't as fierce as the competition with white middle class English people. I don't think the chances of success are the same for a person of Somali origin. I always find that you're having overcome many different obstacles than an English person who grew up in this country and had a privileged background. I don't know how right this is, but at the moment my view is that it's very difficult for ethnic minorities, especially a Somali person, to break into certain professions. I think there is a limit or quota of how many of us can actually make it there, so I do think the competition is very fierce. Just to give you an example, I was discussing

this with one of my friends, she works with refugee children. She went to this meeting with very big players in the immigration field, and she noticed that she was the only ethnic minority in that room. It just so happens, I had a hearing at a High Court, where I had to sit behind a barrister and take instructions and hear one of my cases being played out in court. It struck me, how we live in London and you think it's multicultural and you think we're all equally represented, but the higher up you go you'll notice. It's literally reserved for just white middle-class people. We were talking about this and we both thought if our countries weren't the way they are today or if we had stayed in our countries and there wasn't a civil war, we could've given anyone a good run for their money to get into that sort of position. We know that there's only so much success you're allowed to have in certain professions in the UK. Basically, I think the competition is very fierce, and it's very difficult to compete with people who...it's just a reminder this isn't really your country. (Haboon, female solicitor, 26).

This was the next question: "Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a woman as they are for a man?" Again the question does not clearly set out the position, but I explained to my participants during interviews that I was talking about the success (or otherwise) of Somali females as opposed to Somali males.

Most respondents thought girls were more successful and harder working than boys. Some of the boys also took this view, and said that the girls were outperforming them in education. Respondents attributed their views of girls' success to a variety of reasons. But their main one was that girls are more successful because parents are often much stricter with them, and supervise them closely. It is also said that girls are given household responsibilities, whereas the boys are encouraged to be independent which may lead them to fall in with the wrong crowd. Because of their highly structured and monitored lives, this argument goes, girls succeed in their educational pursuits. Here are some responses that concur with this argument:

I think educationally the girls are doing well. I am not sure about boys ... Girls are doing much better ... I think girls are more emotionally attached to family priorities. Boys can just go and come as they want, not always but the majority of times. But girls are spending more time with their family. They know their mum's situation and

the financial difficulties the family faces routinely. Whatever there is in the house, girls are aware of the position whereas boys come and go. Boys will forget things easily. Boys are like gold fish, and girls are like elephants. We remember things for a long time. If I do badly, I'll remember it for ages. We ruminate about situations past, but I'd like to say that we also learn from them. (Saamiya, f, 21).

That's interesting actually; I think if we're not talking about Somali people, I would say the chances of success are higher for a man than they are for a woman. We are talking about Somali people, and I personally think the chances of success are higher for a woman than they are for a man. The reason for that is that a Somali man is more or less seen as a black man and some employers find that more threatening compared to a Somali woman. So I think in those terms I think Somali women are more likely to succeed than men are. I think there are more females at university, at college and we do a hell of a lot better in school than the boys do. That's because girls, generally speaking, tend to apply themselves more to their education than boys tend to. The last time I checked there was definitely a lot more females at higher education than there were males. Boys could probably just get caught up with whatever is happening nowadays and are not too concerned with education. (Habboon, f, 26).

In the Somali case, sadly I have to say, the girls are succeeding more than the boys simply because it is a lot easier for a boy than for a girl in this society to fall in with the wrong group of people. ... I guess girls are more to themselves. They are less outgoing because of our culture. They stay at home more and help out than the boys. They cook, clean and do this and do that so they're mostly at home. They go out much less than the boys. (Guure, m, 20).

... achievement-wise, I think females seem to show more in early stages of education. I am not sure about the later stages of life. ... When it comes to young Somali people, I think the females are more hard-working. They put a lot more into the house; they put effort into helping their mothers; they clean, etc. so they kind of take on that responsibility, they kind of learn how to uphold something important. And within school, they learn to transfer that sense of responsibility from keeping up the house to keeping up their lives through education. And I don't think it will be that hard to sit down and open a book if it wasn't hard to pick up a Hoover and Hoover the house. So I think it is down to obedience and obeying certain rules and carrying them out. ... In terms of them being different from the boys, I think Somali boys hardly do anything. (Maandeeq, f, 20).

One respondent suggested that girls are more successful because boys do not have role models who can inspire them to reach beyond themselves. With their fathers absent and the mother focusing on the girls, boys lose out:

Yes, I think they have the same opportunities and Somali girls are currently doing better than boys. Maybe boys lack role models, or they may grow up with their father absent, maybe parents focus less on the boys compared to the girls...so maybe the girls do have a slight advantage because the parents focus on them more. (Deeqa, f, 27).

A female trainee nurse claims that girls have more opportunities because they can access both their traditionally gendered roles (e.g., nurses), as well as male-dominated occupations:

Then again, it really depends on your field. But I do believe in general that the female gender is more advantageous because we've a wider variety. We've got a lot more to choose from. I believe a female can go into a wholly male-dominated work area ... You've also got the wholly female-dominated work area, and a lot of guys can't go into those areas mainly because of their specializing and stuff. ... My field, nursing, as you know, there are much more female nurses than there are male nurses. (Weris, f, 23).

A young man suggests that there is discrimination in British society. However, that discriminatory treatment mainly affects the boys and not the girls:

There is discrimination but not for the girls. The girls are the same as the rest of society. I have seen a lot of successful girls. But the boys are not. ... I'd say there is discrimination towards the black people and there is stereotyping, basically hoody, gangs, street corners, the knife problem which is in the headlines now, and this and that. (Said, m, 21).

The view that girls are more successful than boys is supported in much of the literature. In the UK, the gender gap in educational attainment in favour of girls is an august presence (e.g., Marchbank 2002; Tinklin 2003; Atkinson & Wilson 2003; Burgess et al., 2004; Cassen & Kingdon 2007; Younger & Warrington 2007). Elsewhere, girls are outperforming boys at

school, and are more likely to graduate from college than their male counterparts (Sax 2008).

When it comes to the children of immigrants, which is the focus of this research, girls report higher educational aspirations (see Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Zhou & Bankston 2001), and attain higher grades than boys (Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005:1091). According to Patricia Pessar (2007:265), the very immigrant traditions that root girls in the home and reward female compliance may actually contribute to their academic success. Girls' socialization to be cooperative, compliant, and passive may be rewarded by their teachers in overcrowded and understaffed inner city schools. Although girls' domestic responsibilities may reduce time spent at home on schoolwork, it does remove them from the unsavoury features of street life, which is a more common environment for boys (*ibid.*, p. 265).

Finally, I asked what the respondents thought about education: "Some people say education will help you find a good job. Others say that whether you are a school leaver or have a university degree, it does not matter much these days. What do you think?" (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:89).

Respondents provided a consistent set of statements as to why education was important for them in today's world. Among the reasons given was that they needed qualifications to have a stable career. The best way to reach career success is to be educated, they said. Without proper education, one can never accomplish their career goals. Some said they might get a job without having to go to university, but those will always be menial jobs due to the fact that huge numbers of people will have university degrees and take up the good jobs, coupled with the fact that there is fierce competition for work in the UK. Others argued that higher education qualification is necessary should you have a career change later in life. For those who hold no qualifications, their options for a career change are often limited. But those who have

university degrees or higher education qualifications will have more doors open to them in life.

Their answers reflect their parents' educational values and aspirations. In my interviews with them, the parents continually expressed their strong belief in the importance of education, and saw it "as the path to upward mobility for their children" (see Waters 1999:253). Of course, the best way to ensure children will understand the importance of education is to continually explain why education is important, beginning in their early years. By raising children in an atmosphere that places a heavy emphasis on education, children will understand that it is an important tool that can be used for reaching their goals. This, definitely, was the case with the group of young people I interviewed for this project.

There were one or two respondents who expressed the opinion that education might not lead to success. They said they knew someone who went to university, and was having a hard time finding a job. But these doubters were few and far between. The overwhelming majority thought education was absolutely imperative for them to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to adapt to their host society, and to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

Because of their powerful arguments concerning the importance of education, I present here as many of their statements as possible:

It does matter that you're educated because that is what they tend to look at these days. If you go into a website (looking for work), what they tend to look at is that you have to have certain GCSEs. So if you're someone who's been excluded from school and apply for a job in a supermarket, they turn you down. Even the supermarket won't accept you without some GCSEs. It depends where you wanna work; if you want to work in certain sections like businesses, hospitalities, fitness, you need college education. You can't just work in a bank after coming out of school without qualifications. You have to have certain qualifications, such as in accounting, banking or something. So I think college education is very important. (Said, m, 21).

Personally I think education is the key. The world is changing; the technology is changing. For certain jobs that are being created by the new technologies, there is no way you can compete without education to those who are educated. (Iftin, f, 19).

I think obtaining qualifications secures your future, but I have seen many people who have completed university but aren't able to find a job...but at least they've gained knowledge. Not getting a job after gaining a degree is a concern of mine but I still plan on continuing with my education. (Dahabo, f, 24).

I think definitely education will give you a good job in the future. If you are qualified and you've been to university, you'll be more attractive to big companies and big organizations who as we know are always looking for people graduating directly from university. ... on the other hand, if you don't have good education, you'll be always be on the lower end of the job market ... in today's world of credit crunches, fiascos, economy is going down, businesses are struggling, I think it is important to be no. 1 person educationally out there; to reach your full potential. (Mahad, m, 22).

I believe education will help you into a job. ... the people who say education won't help are people who've given up on it, and who might end up working on the shop floor or doing other menial jobs. If you go to university, you can be going for a much better career based jobs that are highly earning. And you will be more comfortable in them as they are very comfortable jobs. For instance, if you were working in a McDonald's this week, you might be having a job next week, you might not, you know what I mean!. So these are more stable jobs, if you go to university and you study for a job and get your position, you are more likely you will be stable and that you will have your job that you always wanted, you know. And is more higher paid with much better conditions and good career path. (Rahman, m, 20).

I think that's a very good question. One thing that previously used to happen was most people that went to university to get a degree, the majority were able to get a job at the end. Since the labour party movement came in, they increased the number of people that are going to university, so I'm told, what happened was saturation occurred. More people were having degrees, and were educated up to university standard, and because of that the number of jobs remained the same even though the number of people with degrees increased. Because of that, having a degree itself isn't enough, we realised you need experience and inter-personal skills that one can bring to a job. In my final year I became aware of this when my friend who is a proactive guy told me he once went to an interview with 10 guys who had top degrees but the one who got the job had an average degree but more experience

relevant to that job. Ten to fifteen years ago, having a degree would help you secure a job, but now it's becoming more competitive and the skills and experience you have are essential. Education isn't just a way to help you secure a job, it is meant to open your mind, to realise a number of things. In terms of education leading to a career, you need to have the relevant skills and experience to help you secure a job. At the moment, the number of jobs available in the market is less compared to before. And I know a lot of people who have a law, accounting or engineering degree who are using the skills they have to create jobs for themselves because companies aren't employing as much as before. I think it's a good thing, and it's probably going to happen more in the future. It's not as simple as people may think, getting a degree won't mean you'll definitely have a job soon after graduating; it may have been in previous decades as only certain classes had the capacity to go to university. Therefore they got the jobs. As times have changed, this country has caught up with other developed countries that have many people turning out from universities, and they have to compete on that level as the people leaving university are the future. I think there's a place for education in everything. (Farhan, m, 25).

Being educated does matter now, more than before...you need to be educated up to degree level because the majority of people nowadays are, so you are at a disadvantage if you're not. (Nawal, f, 20).

Well, it really depends on what kind of job you're looking for. If you go into fishmongering, I suppose you don't need much of an education. It really does kind of depend on what kind of job. In saying this, I will also go back on it. You can't do badly with a couple of degrees under your belt. You can be a shop assistant, but as long as you have a degree I am sure you're bound to progress. Education is, I think, the key to success. You obviously have those entrepreneurs out there who've done it with full experience and their own intuitions. Yes, it happens. But they are only a few people. That is why we know about them. But for the rest of us, we don't have big ideas. We might do but as long as we're not acting on them, we need to get an education and in that a degree or two will help. And I don't really think society as it is today, you can't really go far without some form of qualifications. If you don't have university education, another man will step forward who has it and will get the job just because that man has had 3 extra years in school. (Weris, f, 23).

Education is knowledge for life. I know if I get my education, it will take me one stop further. Even if I can't get a job here, when my country gets better I can go back and work there. Education is very important. (Fardosa, f, 20).

For me definitely, I only have one career I want to pursue and you need an education to follow this career path. (Suuban, f, 28).

Some people do say if you never went school we could've have been in the same position now, but I think in the long run, getting a higher education is more beneficial and you would obtain more than someone who hasn't got a degree. Apart from the financial side of university, I think it's important to get educated even if you don't get the job you want. I think it's a positive experience going to university and acquiring knowledge... (Deeqa, f, 27).

I think it's a tricky question. I don't think education is for everyone. I'm a firm believer that you should do what you enjoy as you tend to do better then. If it's not education, fair enough, I think you should then find an area or industry you'll enjoy. I think young Somalis in the UK should take this great opportunity they have been given for free almost. It's a great opportunity to have. If anything I think education develops you as a person. I don't think it can help you to always find a good job, especially now with the competition in the job market and the credit crunch. I think a formal education somehow makes you a better person... (Habboon, f, 26).

My view is that it definitely matters. If you want to maximise the potential of society, then everyone has to be educated, even though you may not necessary need an education to secure a particular type of job. To truly prosper as a nation, everyone has to be educated. In this society, where everything is dependant on you being able to read, write and understand, you can't say education doesn't matter, when it matters in every aspect of life. (Adil, m, 25).

I've heard Somali females say that education isn't necessary, because at the end of the day, you'll eventually stay at home and become a housewife. You're in a country where education is free, so you should take advantage of it. You can't get a stable career without an education. I'm not going to say jobs because there are menial jobs that don't require an education... The lack of role models within our family is a problem we have, there isn't a relative who is constantly pushing you and encouraging you to achieve. (Zahra, f, 24).

I think absolutely it makes a big difference whether you have education or not. There have been examples of people starting at stacking shelves and making their way to the top of their company, but that is a very rare thing. To get a decent job, that is well paid, you need a good qualification. Everybody's ambition is to get into a middle class life style so they can provide better for themselves and their families,

and so on and so forth. I think a job without a degree will be okay, but it is gonna be so far below what you would have achieved if you've got a degree. The world of work is much more competitive than it used to be in the past, so you need good education and qualifications to be able to compete with other people. (Guure, m, 20).

For me, I think education is important because I don't want to be a housewife for the rest of my life. I have so far been to college and to university. I see that education does build up your personality, and your individuality. It also helps in your growth as a person. And you definitely have an advantage if you're educated to teach your kids. As I have told you, having my mum who's an educated person was a big advantage for me. So yes, it is definitely crucial and not being able to always count on a husband and that may or may not work out so just to be that independent is something that is a priority for me. Marriage and education are both important but, for me, I want to get educated first than going into marriage. (Maandeeq, f, 20).

Conclusion

Chapters 5, 6 & 7 addressed a number of key themes drawn from interviews with young people. In these themes, I have examined some of the main variables 'shaping socioeconomic trajectories in early adulthood' (Rumbaut 2005:1083), namely family situation, educational experience and achievement, occupational aspirations, and career trajectories, ethnic identities, experiences and expectations of discrimination, and social adjustment. My in-depth interviews provide rich detail on the lived experience of these young people as they enter adulthood, illuminate the barriers they face, and help us understand whether they can overcome these barriers (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

I find that many of the young people interviewed are moving ahead educationally. Some are also successful occupationally. However, a significant minority is being left behind. Of these, there are the long-term unemployed. Others are NEET, or not currently engaged in employment, education or training. Entry into the labour market is a particular problem

for both males and females. A few of the males have engaged in delinquent behaviours, and have even served time in Young Offender Institutions (YOI). Several young men also got involved with gangs and violence, and openly led a drug-dictated lifestyle resulting in some being sent back to Somalia 'for rehabilitation'. At least one young man has been resettled back in his parents' old home-town with a great effort on the part of his parents in London who were determined 'to save his life'.

The evidence also points to the fact that girls are outperforming boys both academically and in the labour markets. Consistent with existing literature, the data supports the argument that 'second-generation girl's more highly structured and monitored lives can have positive effects on educational attainment' (Foner & Kasiniz 2007:277). The young women in this study not only have higher educational expectations and attainment, they also aspire to higher status jobs than their male counterparts. The data illustrates how educational and occupational choices are intertwined, and how goals and trajectories differ for young men and women (compare Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005). While some of the young women have set their sights on traditionally gendered occupations, such as nursing, medical sciences and teaching, others aspire to attain higher status occupations. One young woman who trained as a solicitor had found a job at a top high street London law firm. Respondents clearly begin from different family starting points and face different opportunity structures, leading to their varied trajectories into young adulthood (compare Kasinitz et al., 2008).

The last two themes addressed were transnationalism, and young people's 'subjective understanding of success' (see Mollenkopf et al., 2005:466). In the first, I provide evidence of transnationalism in relation to (a) parents sending their children "back home" for part of their education, and for 'social and cultural learning infused with religious values' (Levitt 2007:64); (b) parents sending or taking their children "back home" to get them out of a negative environment in the host country (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:53);

(c) parents taking or sending an unruly child “back home” because they believe younger siblings are clearly at risk of learning from him and moving into the same lifestyle as him (two parents acknowledged having done this); and (d) parents creating social networks and relationships across borders to maximize opportunities for their children (compare Smith 2006). I then briefly summarize evidence of ‘transnational activism’ (Levitt & Waters 2002:19) by the young people themselves, such as sending remittances, maintaining social contacts, interest in homeland media and politics, and visits to the home country.

All the young people interviewed had very positive attitudes towards education. Virtually everyone (including even those who were married) said that they would want to delay marriage until they have completed their education and have made a start in their chosen career. There was no gender difference in their responses. Girls in particular mentioned the need to be educated first so that as a parent one can help their children with school subjects later in life. Other respondents took a perspective of history and talked about Somali traditional marriage and family formation, and the older generations’ views on the topic. But they all came to the same conclusion that it was far more preferable to delay marriage because of such factors as economic necessity or a desire to complete one’s education.

Everyone aspired to ‘conventional success goals: academic success, self-efficacy, and employment in the formal labour market, etc.’ (see Elliott et al., 2006:289). Earning your living by doing an honest day’s work, and not becoming reliant on benefits were these young people’s watchwords.

Part IV: Discussion & Conclusion

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research was initially stimulated by concerns about Somali young people's underachievement. Their parent generation has come into the UK as refugees and asylum seekers and has endured much occupational and social downgrading (Harris 2004; Griffiths 2002). According to some recent figures, Somalis had the lowest levels of employment among the new immigrants at 12.2 per cent, and also the highest proportions of inactivity at 60.2 per cent (Kyambi 2005:3). A more recent IPPR report puts the latter figure at 71 per cent (IPPR 2007:17). In terms of settlement, the Somali population was clustered in inner-city neighbourhoods characterised by deprivation, high levels of unemployment, crime problems, poor quality services and limited local amenities (Cole & Robinson 2003:ii).

Most Somali young people were said to fare less well than the children of other new communities in the UK (Rutter 2003, 2005, 2006; Watters 2008). Many of them leave full time education unconfident and underachieving, and their job prospects limited (*ibid.*). As Muslims and recent arrivals, the Somalis' language and culture cuts them off from mainstream British society and decreases their children's access to education and employment in the new environment (e.g., Griffiths 2002; Rutter 2006; Harris 2004). Thus Somali youth were potentially excluded from mainstream society, and were at risk of depression and developing mental health problems (Harris 2004:4).

With many predicting a bleak future for the children of Somali refugees, I set about finding out what 'was happening to these young men and women and how they become part of British life' (compare Hirschman, Kasinitz, &

De Wind 1999). What I found was quite different from the above gloomy prognosis. I introduce a summary of that evidence in the next section. The following section is an attempt at explaining young people's trajectories. In it, the empirical evidence will be evaluated on the basis of the main theoretical approach 'segmented assimilation' proposed in chapter two. I then present a brief overview of the challenges confronting Somali young people and their parents. Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for theory, research and practice.

The state of Somali young people in the study: a summary of the evidence

Despite all the hardships they faced and their recent arrival, most of my respondents went to college and had completed two or more years of post-compulsory education after leaving school. Many had achieved good academic results that would allow them to gain entry to demanding degree courses at both modern and old universities across London and the Southeast. A few have gained professional degrees from elite universities.

Overall, 16 out of 26 young people or 62 per cent of the respondents went to university. Six have already qualified whereas ten are still at university. Amongst the latter is a young man who was unable to secure a job for two years after leaving university with a first or upper class degree. He is now undertaking a self-financed MSc. Degree course in airport planning and management. Gender wise, 5 men out of 12 went to university whereas 11 out of 14 females (or close to 80%) attended or are attending university. Young people with the highest grades tended to attend the most prestigious universities. Among these are two females and one male who entered 'elite' universities within the 'Russell Group' (King's College London (2 females), and a male doctor who trained at University College London).

Like students from other minority communities, girls continue their advantage in my study group. Yet, they still face strong subject segregation for they are less likely to attend Russell Group universities (see Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2010:647).³⁰ 12 out of 16 students attend a new university. One young woman is training to be an osteopath at the Surrey Institute of Osteopathic Medicine (SIOM). At that rate, they are no worse off than other black children in the UK. In the latest Equality & Human Rights Commission Triennial Review, it is suggested that less than 10% of Black students are at Russell Group universities, compared to a quarter of White students (Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2010:647). The proportion of my research participants at Russell Group universities is just under 19%, a slight improvement on the aforementioned figure.

The data gives a particularly good sense of how far these young people have progressed in their education. However, conclusions about their career outcomes must remain tentative not least because most participants are still relatively young (19-28, with a median age of 23 years) (compare Mollenkopf et al., 2005).

At the time of interviews, 11 participants (3 males and 8 females) were in full-time university education. Three others were in professional occupations (a doctor, a nurse, and a solicitor). This group had strong academic abilities, attitudes and values during their schooling, which in turn have been shown to be related to the resources and the value placed on education in families of higher social class (Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele 1998, cited by Osgood et al., 2005:345).

There were five further young people (three males and two females) who were working, some with jobs they viewed as steps on a career path rather than long term. One of the males, Mahad (22) has been working in his local Sainsburys' for the past 3-4 years. Another, 20 year-old Guure, has worked in Pizza restaurants and local supermarkets since he was 17. One of the

young women (Deeqa, 27) has a job as an editorial assistant. She has already earned her bachelor's degree and has also embarked on a part-time MA course. The two young men were currently engaged in their first degree courses at university, but were also working at reduced hours.

The third male, Alas (25), works as a driver for a London Council. He also had a second job on the side at his mum's Poundshop. The 2nd female, Dahabo (24), is pursuing further education at college alongside her part-time care assistant job. She brushed up her literacy and numeracy skills, and gained NVQ qualifications. At the time of interview, she was undertaking a nursing access and foundation course which, if she completes successfully, will allow her to study for a diploma in nursing.

The evidence also points to the fact that girls are outperforming boys both academically and in the labour markets. Consistent with existing literature, the data supports the argument that 'second-generation girl's more highly structured and monitored lives can have positive effects on educational attainment' (Foner & Kasiniz 2007:277). The young women in this study not only have higher educational expectations and attainment, they also aspire to higher status jobs than their male counterparts. The data illustrates how educational and occupational choices are intertwined, and how goals and trajectories differ for young men and women (compare Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005). While some of the young women have set their sights on traditionally gendered occupations, such as nursing, medical sciences and teaching, others aspire to attain higher status occupations. One young woman who trained as a solicitor had found a job at a top high street London law firm.

Like the immigrant youths in Berry et al.'s (2006:139) research, the young people in my study are generally well adapted. They have strong Somali ethnic identity, but also appear to be comfortable in their British/London context in terms of identity, language, peer contacts, and values. They demonstrated high English language proficiency and good Somali language

command, and use both of them. They have friends from both their own ethnic group and from other groups, and generally feel that they are rarely discriminated against. Such profile, according to Berry et al. (2006:108), shows involvement with the new society by these young people while retaining their ethnic heritage, thus reflecting a general preference for integration.

In all, the young people in this research move easily among friends of many different backgrounds and enjoy the diversity, vibrancy, and hybrid culture of London, which defines Britain for them (compare Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters 2004). Theirs is a life of working and networking, loving and living with others from different national, linguistic, religious and racial backgrounds (see Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard 2004:4). Asked 'What are your friends like?', one young man had this to say:

"I have friends from practically every country in the world ... I also have friends from work and those I socialise with." (Farhan, m, 25).

Most respondents also demonstrate resilience and continue to strive for success. Their resilience is fuelled from three main sources. One is relational – they have supportive friends and are connected with extended family and relations. But also in their relationships with others, they are friendly, respectful and responsible (see Suárez-Orozco & Todorova 2003:18). Secondly, they are most often people of faith, and are deeply family oriented.

According to Sam et al. (2006:141), the experience of in-group support linked to a strong sense of religiosity protects youth from the otherwise negative effect that cultural distance may have. This sense of belonging, in Sam et al.'s view, is perhaps even positively affected by more or less adverse living conditions (ibid.). The third aspect of their resilience is that of persistence and hope (see Suárez-Orozco & Todorova 2003:18). They want to

be able to get an education or training, better jobs, and thus more money (see Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova 2008:362).

Most young people thought education was absolutely essential 'to acquire the skills, beliefs, capacity for moral reasoning, and experiences and opportunities required for effective participation in society' (see Elliott et al., 2006:57). One young man declared that he wanted to be educated so that he can compete for good jobs with others, and join the ranks of the middle class:

I think absolutely it makes a big difference whether you have education or not. There have been examples of people starting at stacking shelves and making their way to the top of their company, but that is a very rear thing. To get a decent job, that is well paid, you need a good qualification. Everybody's ambition is to get into a middle class life style so they can provide better for themselves and their families, and so on and so forth. I think a job without a degree will be okay, but it is gonna be so far below what you would have achieved if you've got a degree. The world of work is much more competitive than it used to be in the past, so you need good education and qualifications to be able to compete with other people. (Guure, m, 20).

When asked 'What would you like to be doing in 10 years time?', most respondents mentioned gaining a university qualification, a job, money, being married, and having kids. Several young men and women had great expectations for their future. Among them was Zahra, a registered nurse working at a large teaching hospital, who still wanted to advance towards a higher stage in medicine by becoming a doctor:

I don't see myself as successful, I think I'm average...I would say I'm slightly successful as I graduated from high school, college and university and I landed a good job. I'm successful in terms of achieving what I've wanted but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop here, there's still lots of things I want to achieve...this is just a stepping stone, I'm still climbing up the success ladder. So in ten years time I would like to become either a cardiologist or gynaecologist. I've got another 4 years of education to go; I want to train as a medical doctor. I don't know whether to study

it now or to wait a while, but I'll study it full time, it would be difficult studying medicine part time as it would take longer and it'd be harder. (Zahra, f, 24).

Most young people have demonstrated 'particularly rapid upward mobility' (compare Kasinitiz et al., 2008). We must, however, learn to temper our enthusiasm for this good news with the fact that a significant minority is being left behind. Of these, there are the long-term unemployed. Others are neet, or not currently engaged in employment, education or training.

Entry into the labour market is a particular problem for both males and females. A few of the males have engaged in delinquent behaviours, and have even served some time in Young Offender Institutions (YOI). Several young men also got involved with gangs and violence, and openly led a drug-dictated lifestyle resulting in some being sent back to Somalia 'for rehabilitation'. At least one young man has been resettled back in his parents' old home-town with a great effort on the part of his parents in London who were determined 'to save his life'.

Being not in employment, education or training (NEET) is another problem for young people. There are 7 Neets in the group (5 men and 2 women) as opposed to 8 people who are at work. The ages of the former ranged from 20 to 27. Three of them are above the age of 24: a married young woman with a child and two young men, one of them also married with a child. The rest are young people who have left school with little or no qualifications. Some have had work experience, others not; and several have suffered extended unemployment.

Even for those who had jobs, it wasn't the kind of work most of them (or their parents) would have aspired to. It tended to be not just routine and low-paid, but also well outside the mainstream economy (compare Abrams 2010). These young people had thus accumulated significant amounts of nonwork in their early to mid-twenties, 'a period when young adults should be developing the job skills and work records that lead to long-term stable

employment and wage growth, and that protect against poverty' (see Corcoran & Matsudaira 2005:386).

According to Corcoran & Matsudaira (2005:386), there is suggestive evidence (*in the American context*) that it becomes easier for high-income families to pass their economic advantages on to their children. That is something which does not exist for Somali young people who, owing to their refugee experience, grew up in disadvantaged economic circumstances.

Bloch (2009:170) cites past research with refugees that has consistently shown low levels of employment and underemployment (e.g., Dumper 2002; Charliff et al., 2004; Phillimore and Goodson 2006). In her own research, she found that, almost uniformly, refugees were unable to use their skills and experiences and were working in secondary-sector jobs for low pay, with poor terms and conditions of employment and with little or no opportunity for progression (Bloch 2009:182). Among her study group, the only community for which there was little difference in the labour market activity between men and women (i.e., in their low levels of employment) was the Somali community (ibid., p. 172).

The reasons for refugees' predicament, according to Bloch (2009:182), are diverse and complex but include the limited networks that refugees have and their heavy reliance on these networks for job seeking, which perpetuates and continues to root many in secondary-sector jobs. Other research has highlighted, among other things, attitudes to refugees, discrimination, and accent as impeding refugees' opportunities (ibid., p. 182). Are the children of Somali refugees facing a similar position in the labour market? While an examination of the employment barriers facing young Somali people is beyond the remit of this thesis, there are few anecdotal reports of discrimination against young males in particular. I will say more about this in the next section.

Explaining Somali young people's trajectories

Guided by the main theoretical approach surveyed in Chapter two, *segmented assimilation*, I present in this section an explanation of the trajectories of these young people 'as they navigate through host society structures to forge positive pathways for their success as adults' (see Garcia Coll & Szalacha 2004:81). Evidence from the data will also be presented in support of theoretical positions.

Segmented assimilation was first articulated by American sociologists Alejandro Portes & Min Zhou (1993). According to Charles Hirschman (2001:319), this theory implies a diversity of outcomes within and between contemporary immigrant streams. That is to say, some immigrant groups that possess high levels of human capital and that receive a favourable reception may be launched quickly on a path of upward socioeconomic mobility and integration. Other groups with fewer resources may not be able to find stable employment or wages that allow them to successfully sponsor their children's education and upward mobility. Indeed, the second generation may be exposed to the adolescent culture of inner-city schools and communities, which discourages education and aspirations for social mobility (e.g., Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995). A third path is one of limited assimilation, in which immigrant parents seek to sponsor their children's educational success but limit their acculturation into American youth by reinforcing traditional cultural values (Hirschman 2001: 319). The segmented-assimilation hypothesis predicts that adaptation is contingent on geographical location, social class of the family of origin, "race," and place of birth (ibid., p. 319).

Lee & Bean (2004:227) put it more bluntly. In their view, segmented assimilation hypothesis posits three possible pathways of immigrant incorporation: straight-line assimilation into the white middle-class (e.g., light-skinned Cubans in Miami); assimilation into the minority underclass (e.g., Haitians in Miami); or selective assimilation in which immigrants

remain immersed in the ethnic community and preserve the immigrant community's values and solidarity as a means to achieve upward mobility (e.g., Punjabi Sikh Indians in Northern California).

I suggest the contemporary situation of Somali refugees can be readily understood within the framework of the latter two options. Option two mentions groups 'with fewer resources' who live in inner-city areas and whose children are exposed to the 'oppositional culture' of youth in these areas (e.g., Ogbu 1978, 1991, 1998, 2003). The principal contribution of segmented assimilation theory is to explain the influence of parental human capital and modes of incorporation as they affect the formation of immigrant communities and the lives of young people living in them (Portes & Rumbaut 2006: 27).

So let us deal with parental human capital first. The educational and occupational profiles of the parents in 1997, during my first interviews with them, and again in 2008/9 appear in Tables 8.1 & 8.2 below. There are 5 parents with university or college level education as opposed to 2 who have had no formal education at all. All the men (N= 4) belong to the first group, whereas the two respondents who have had no formal education are both women. Only one woman out of the six had university level education. Among the other women, one had secondary education, and two had completed primary education. A key attribute of immigrants is their human capital, one measure of which is years of schooling (Jasso et al., 2000:131). These figures suggest that the Somali refugee parents I interviewed in 1997 and again 2008 exhibit both educational advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages, as we can see in table 8.2, become much greater among the women who, on the whole, have far less years of education than the men.

The significance of parental education for occupational and economic success of the children can scarcely be exaggerated. Parents with high levels of human capital are in a better position to support their children's

adaptation for many reasons (Portes & Rumbaut 2006:266). One has to be cautious, however, when linking notions of 'parental human capital' to the success of their children in the context of refugees and asylum seekers. Whilst the 10 parents interviewed for this project came from different educational and social backgrounds, all were recently arrived refugees from war-torn Somalia. Most lived on income support, in overcrowded and temporary accommodation (see Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995). Can parental education alone translate into occupational and economic success for the children in these contexts?

That question becomes even more pertinent with the fact that the lower down the socio-economic scale an individual or a family is in the UK, the less able they are to access or make full use of educational opportunities (Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007:32). This common knowledge is backed up by research studies providing evidence of the differential experiences of working class and middle class pupils (*ibid.*, p. 32). In practice what this means is that parents from lower socioeconomic groups are less likely to be able to get their children into the 'best' schools, or to liaise assertively with teachers on behalf of their children, or to help with decisions about a university education (see, for instance, Ball and Gewirtz, 1997; Reay, 1998; Reay et al., 2001; Ball 2003).

Children from middle-class backgrounds with highly educated parents start with obvious advantages here, while those whose parents have little education, difficulty speaking English, and low incomes are at a clear disadvantage (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2004:21). The latter group represents the position of a majority of the Somali parents I interviewed in 1997, and again in 2008.

In terms of occupational background, as can be seen in table 8.2, all the 4 men had professional occupations prior to their arrival in the UK. Two of these men worked as security guards in London in 1997, whereas two others were unemployed. 3 mothers had also professional occupations prior

to coming to the UK, and one woman, Daruuro, was involved in business and retail trade. Two other females, Halimo-Sa'diyo & Awralo, were housewives and had no jobs outside the home prior to their flight from Somalia. In 1997, as I did these interviews with them, all the six women were full-time homemakers, and had no jobs outside their homes.

In my second round of interviews with them at the end of 2008/9, one of the men (Mohamed Ga'al) returned to Somalia pursuing a political career in a failed state. Another man, Abdi Sharraawe, had also forayed into Somali politics in early 2008 by becoming an official of the TFG administration. He lasted in that job for only 4 months, and is now back in London working as a mini-cab driver. The two men who worked as security guards in 1997 have now transformed themselves into a health worker (Hussein) and a community organizer (Muumin). As for the women, there are only two changes: one woman (Daruuro) now runs her own shop in North London. The other woman is Mulki who now has a job as a School Escort for children with special needs. The 4 remaining women are exactly where they were back in 1997, full-time homemakers.

What we see in here is that the level of education received in the country of origin and the "wealth of employment experience" (Bloch & Atfield 2002:33) these men and women had in Somalia was not reflected in their occupational position in the UK in July 1997, and again in 2008/9. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Thomas and Abebaw, 2002; Africa Educational Trust, 2002) that found similar occupational downgrading amongst Somali refugees and asylum seekers in various boroughs of London.

The next external challenge confronting these children is the social context they encounter, in schools and neighbourhoods, which may promote a set of undesirable outcomes inimical to successful integration such as dropping out of school, joining youth gangs, and using and selling drugs (Portes et al., 2005:1008). This alternative path has been labelled downward assimilation

because exposure to American (read British) society and entry into its social circles does not lead, in these cases, to upward mobility, but exactly to the opposite (Portes and Zhou 1993).

In the words of Alejandro Portes et al. (2005), “there is a very unenviable scenario of youth gangs, drug-dictated lifestyles ... imprisonment, and early death” (p. 1004). The dramatic accounts of Said (m, 21), Kassim (m, 21), Jidhaan (m, 25), and Muhibo’s elder son (Qatar, 20) who was serving time in a YOI (Younger Offender Institution) for ‘drug related offences’ provide significant illustrations of this path. I cannot summarize this important evidence here because of space limitations. Hence I refer the reader to look at their stories in part II of the thesis.

In all of these cases, there is a harsh, inharmonious and discordant relationship between parent and child. Portes & Rumbaut (2001:308) call it *dissonant acculturation*. This takes place when children’s learning of English and introjections of American cultural outlooks so exceed their parents’ as to leave the latter hopelessly behind. This path is marked by sharply higher levels of family conflict and decreasing parental authority because of divergent expectations and children’s diminishing regard for their own cultural origins. According to Portes & Rumbaut, parents in this situation often complain that they cannot control their children since their entreaties and attempts are often ignored. Working-class immigrants and those lacking the support of co-ethnic communities are at greater risk of moving along this path because their own poverty reduces the authority of their directives, which are further weakened by lack of external validation (ibid., p. 308).

Their next statement provides a penetrating insight into the position of these families: “Parents enjoining their youths in Creole or Spanish to abide by the norms of their culture may have little to show for it. Their own unenviable situation stands as a negative model showing, in their children’s eyes, that such allegiance does not pay” (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:308).

Now consider the position of one of the parents I interviewed in 1997, and then again at the end of 2008 – Hussein Waasuge. In the earlier interview (July 1997), Hussein was happy that his children were in full-time education in the UK, but suggested that their future might not be very bright. This is because “they are in receipt of negative cultural influences,” he said. To counter these, according to Hussein, the parents talked to the children at home in Somali so that they will maintain their language and tradition. The children also attended *Madrassa*, and the local mosque several times a week. There they learned Somali language and literature, the *Koran* and the prayers. All of this, in Hussein’s view, was going to help the children become acquainted with the Islamic tradition, and in the process adapt better to life in the UK.

In my second interview with him, some 11½ years later, Hussein reported that his second eldest son, Kassim (21), had repeatedly been in trouble at school and, in the end, dropped out altogether. He started dealing and using drugs, committed violent crimes, and got involved with gangs. The parents decided to return Kassim to Somalia because his younger siblings were clearly at risk of learning from him and moving into the same lifestyle as him. When Kassim was brought back to London after a few years, he went straight back to his old friends and resumed his gang activities. Kassim was once again returned to Somalia, this time at his own free choice, according to the father. Kassim now has a wife and children in Somalia.

I asked Hussein what went wrong, and this is what he had to say:

The problem comes from the fact that your child is not doing well at school. They are grouped with the failing native children. And those native children who are failing are children who also have other problems. Our children will sit with them and they will learn whatever bad they can learn from them. So your children will end up with failing native children, and then they will get the negative things these kids have which will lead them to fail alongside the natives. ... The thing is we didn’t expect our children to have the problems they faced here. For example, we were some of the first Somali people who came into this country in the 1990s. There were no other

Somali children before us which we could learn from, so we were the experiment if you want to put it that way. ... We used to say "Oh, the black people are not doing that good. ... Oh, Jamaicans are ..." We didn't know that we are in a similar transition, and we could end up even worse. ... There is crime, drugs and all the other social problems associated with a poor neighbourhood. It is a big problem raising children in the UK.

With a feeling of desperation and helplessness, this is what Muhibo (a mother whose son was serving time in gaol) had to say about how her children had become resistant to control in the UK:

"It is very different between how things are today and the euphoria that we've had upon arrival in this country. The kids, however much effort you make to put them on the straight and the narrow, will just turn nasty. In my case, I've tried very hard to put them on the right path. I don't think there was any other parent who tried as hard as myself, but then what have I got show for it. It is the environment, i.e., the school, the neighbourhood, friends, TV, etc., that is bigger than you and your family which will decide what happens to your child".

When immigrants enter a new country, they often face barriers to full inclusion in the economic activities of the host society (Waters & Eschbach 1995:437). Besides outright discrimination, this occurs also because of the absence of network ties necessary to gain access to the labour market (*ibid.*). The segmented assimilation model captures both (see figure 2.1, p. 83). In the American context, according to the formulators of this theory, children of Asian, black, mulatto, and mestizo immigrants cannot escape their ethnicity and race, as defined by the mainstream. Their enduring physical differences from whites and the equally persistent strong effects of discrimination based on those differences, especially against black persons, throws a barrier in the path of occupational mobility and social acceptance (Portes et al. 2005:1005).

The evidence from the literature is that Somali immigrants in the UK face barriers to employment such as non-recognition of pre-migration qualifications, employer discrimination, lack of transferable skills, and lack

of network ties necessary to gain access to the labour market (Bloch & Atfield 2002; Bloch 2004, 2009). If these explanations are correct, then the picture must now look rosier at least for their children who were born or bred in this country, acquired British qualifications and fluency in English, and have had an opportunity to develop British social networks (see Heath & McMahon 2005:394). Sadly, that statement proves more problematic than it sounds when looked at the evidence.

I have already discussed the NEET group, and the fact that some of the unemployed young men have been out of a job for many years. I now present a summary of the narratives of two young men who were looking for work for two years and still couldn't get jobs. One of them was a university graduate; the other one left university half-way. I also present, alongside these narratives, the parents' views about their children's lack of success in finding work.

1st narrative. Adil, aged 25, completed a BA course in business management in July 2007 graduating with a 1st. He sent off his CV to multitudes of companies and waited for job offers to come in, but to no avail. Almost two years on and still with no job, Adil decided this last summer to embark on a postgraduate course rather than stay at home and do nothing. In September 2009, he began an MSc course in 'Airport Planning and Management'. The family raised all the funding for Adil to do this course [Personal Communication with Adil's mother, 6th Nov. 2009, & with Adil, 8th Nov. 2009].

Adil's experience may not be dissimilar to that of other 'young people from ethnic minorities finding it harder to enter the jobs market on leaving school or college and extending their education' (Abrams 2009). Still, it must have caused him great distress that he couldn't find work for such a long period of time after leaving university. In our interview, Adil seems to suggest that he remained unemployed for a while because he was very particular about the kind of job he wanted, and wasn't prepared to take anything that comes

his way: "I just didn't wanna settle for any job. I was very picky about the kind of job that I was going to do, and that is what contributed to not having a job for a while."

Adil's mum takes a different approach to the problem. In her view, it was difficult for her son to find a job because the family, being refugees from Somalia, does not have the networks and personal contacts necessary to help their children get into employment. But also her words reveal suspicions of 'racism and discrimination' lurking in her mind:

"When young people finish university, it is quite difficult to get a job. With racism and discrimination often being in the background, the prevailing problems of economic downturn and jobs shrinking in the market is also impacting on young people. When compared to graduates from other (non-Somali) groups, I'd say young Somali graduates find it very hard to secure a job. The *Timajilic* (literally, soft-haired – a name many Somalis use for Asians) can secure ... a placement or a job while still at university in a variety of places such as a GP, in a bank, or in a similar private practice because their people are everywhere. For example, there was a *Timajilac* boy in our area who went to university with my son Adil. Whereas Adil obtained a 1st, the Indian boy graduated with a 2:1 or was it a 2:2, I can't really remember. They were always friends up to their high school. I used to give them a lift when they want to play with friends, and I'd bring them home when they finish. The boy's dad would also take them out to play together. They both graduated on the same day, 13th of July 2007, from university. By end of July or August 2007, the Asian boy was in full employment. Adil is nearing the end of his 2nd year after graduation and hasn't still found a job [Interview with Jimo, 6th March 2009]."

2nd narrative. Zaki (23) was not in education, training or employment at the time of my interview with him in January 2009. He said he put off going to university this year so that he could get a job, and get married: "I found things getting harder, and want to get a job and start a family." I understand Zaki was looking for a job, even as he went to university in all of 2008. He got married 'at the beginning of the summer (2009) and moved in with the bride's family', according to his father. The father also told me that Zaki was still looking for a job (15.10.09), and that they shall continue living with the wife's family until Zaki can get a job and the couple are able to rent their

own place. In the summer of 2010, word has it Zaki and his wife had a baby boy some months ago, and he still hasn't got a job.

I do not believe that the Somali young people's experience of joblessness here was somehow a fulfillment of American sociologist Herbert Gans' (1992) prophecy of "second-generation decline". Gans warned that *many* of the contemporary children of "nonwhite" immigrants were in danger of "second-generation decline" relative to their immigrant parents. Like traditional observers of assimilation, Gans assumes that substantial second-generation acculturation is taking place and that the children of immigrants are coming to share the values and outlooks of their American peers. This, Gans suggests, may lead them to reject the low-status "immigrant jobs" held by their parents (Foner & Kasinitz 2007:274). Yet those who face racial discrimination, poor-quality education, and declining real wages may lack opportunities in the mainstream economy and thus be downwardly mobile (ibid.). The young people I interviewed, including Zaki above, were willing to take up literally any job.

When asked if he thought the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person, Zaki's father – speaking from a personal experience – responded in a direct and categorical negative:

I think the native communities have (better chances) than us. We're a disadvantaged group. If you apply for a job which a native person, with similar qualifications and experiences as you, also applies, you expect that person to get the job because of who he is. I think we'll never have an equal chance with people like those. We're told that there can be no discrimination, etc. But, if you apply for a job, there is a panel (an interview panel); you'll never know what their motives are; you'll never know what they will base their decision on. They may give you a fair chance as per the law of the land. But you don't know whether you'll get that (fairness) from them. The chances are you won't. I have been through these because I've applied for jobs. I came across situations when people who were less qualified than I or were less experienced than me got the job and not me. (Hussein Waasuge, 26 Dec. 2008).

According to Portes et al. (2005:1016), segmented assimilation may be defined empirically as a set of strategic outcomes in the lives of the children of immigrants. One such outcome is educational attainment, in terms of both completed years of education and whether the person is still in school. A second includes employment, occupation and income; a third, language use and preferences. Indicators of downward assimilation include dropping out of school, premature childbearing, being unemployed, and being arrested or incarcerated for a crime.

The evidence from this research indicates that many of the young people, the girls in particular, are successfully navigating the British education system. Because they are still young, we cannot foretell if they will be able to establish a foothold in society and gain economic mobility in the UK. But to the extent that they are educationally progressing, the optimistic variant of the classic assimilation approach proposed by Alba and Nee (1997, 2003) is supported. However, this approach neglects a sizable minority that is falling behind educationally, that is weighed down by unemployment and worklessness, that is afflicted by drug addiction, that has plunged through violence and criminality to hopelessness and despair and, in the worst cases, is already in jail (see The Centre for Social Justice 2009).

For the segmented assimilation hypothesis to be disproved, according to Portes et al. (2005:1019), one of two things needs to be demonstrated: 1) that downward assimilation does not exist or affects only an insignificant number of second generation youths; 2) that differences between immigrant nationalities are random so that, regardless of the average human capital and mode of incorporation of different groups, they will have about the same number of 'success stories' and failures in the second generation. If this were the case, theoretical predictions based on the segmented assimilation model would be falsified. We have seen that the first of these two conditions does not obtain. This research has not looked at the variables contained in proposition two. I now discuss the ways in which Somali parents and their children confront these challenges.

8.1 Educational & Occupational Profile of Parents Interviewed in 1997

Parent interviewed	Name of Parent	Level of Education in 1997	Occupation Before Arrival in the UK	Present Occupation in the UK in 1997
Mother	Mulki	University Education	School Teacher	Full-time, homemaker (i.e., has no job outside the house)
Mother	Muhibo	Secondary Education	Civil Service, & later a Businesswoman	Full-time, homemaker
Mother	Amino	Primary Education (Intermediate)	Teacher; later Retail Trader	Full-time, homemaker
Mother	Halimo-Sa'diyo	Had no formal education	Housewife, & had no job.	Full-time, homemaker
Father	Muumin	University Education	Teacher at a Forestry College	Security Guard
Mother	Awralo	Had no formal education	Housewife, & had no job.	Full-time, homemaker
Mother	Daruuro	Primary Education	Was involved in business & retail trade	Full-time, homemaker
Father	Hussein	College Graduate	Medical Nurse	Security Guard
Father	Abdi	University Education	Military Officer	Unemployed
Father	Mohamed	College Graduate	Senior Military Officer	Unemployed

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.

8.2 Educational & Occupational Profile of Parents Interviewed in 2008/2009

Parent interviewed	Name of Parent	Level of Education in 2008/9	Occupation Before Arrival in the UK	Present Occupation in the UK in 2008/9
Mother	Mulki	University Education	School Teacher	School Escort
Mother	Muhibo	Secondary Education	Civil Service, & later a Businesswoman	Full-time, homemaker
		University Education	Diplomat	Unemployed (Elderly)
Father	Mohyadin			
Mother	Amino	Primary Education (Intermediate)	Teacher; later Retail Trader	Care Assistant
		Primary Education (Intermediate)	Driver	Taxi Driver
Father	Mattan			
Mother	Halimo-Sa'diyo	Had no formal education	Housewife, & had no job.	Full-time, homemaker
Father	Muumin	University Education	Teacher at a Forestry College	Community Organizer
Mother	Awralo	Had no formal education	Housewife, & had no job.	Full-time, homemaker
Mother	Daruuro	Primary Education	Was involved in business & retail trade	Retailer
Father	Hussein	University	Medical Nurse	Health-care

		Education		Professional
Father	Abdi	University Education	Military Officer	Mini-cab Driver
Mother	Naima	Has no formal education	Housewife, & had no job.	Housewife, & has no job.
Father	Mohamed	College Graduate	Senior Military Officer	Politician in Somalia
Mother	Jimo	College Graduate	School Teacher	Full-time, homemaker
Extra Parent (Mother)	Bilaajo	University Education	University Lecturer	Community Organizer
Father*	Jimale*	University Education	Civil Engineer	Businessman

List of abbreviations and other descriptors used in the table:

- The parent coloured in yellow is an extra parent.
- All names of persons mentioned in the table are pseudonyms.
- * I did not talk to this parent. I merely collected his information from his wife.

Confronting the challenges

The most striking innovation in the segmented assimilation model, according to Kasinitz et al. (2008:346), lies in two of its predictions. The first is that downward assimilation does *not* occur because the children of immigrants fail to Americanize. It occurs, rather, because they do so too quickly, relative to their parents, *or* assimilate into the "wrong" segments of American society. The second is that those children whose immigrant parents do not have particularly high educations or incomes can achieve

upward mobility through a strategy of selective acculturation—staying at least partially ethnic and embedded in ethnic communities. In making these two predictions, in the view of Kasinitz et al., the segmented assimilation theory stands the standard assimilation model *on its head*. For at least some immigrants, the argument goes, coming quickly and easily to share American (or at least lower class American) ways is bad for the second generation. Holding on to immigrant distinctiveness can be an advantage (*ibid.*).

That was the Somali parents' watchword from the word go. A major theme consistently present in their conversations was the fear of losing their children to the new culture. A majority of them were preoccupied with external influences, and in particular negative school influences but also how they could keep their children away from becoming involved with the wrong crowd of peers. One of these parents was Abdi who feared that his son Jamal might be led astray by other kids. Abdi would always make sure that he knew the whereabouts of his son by asking him such questions as:

“Who are you going out with? Who are they? When did you go out? When did you come back? What are you going to watch on TV, and when?”

The parents saw children in the inner city areas where they lived as unruly, undisciplined, and often frightening examples of what happens when children get too much freedom (compare Waters 1999). The stories of assaults and racist attacks by yobs on some of the poor single mothers and their children catalogued in their stories above was a good example the parents cited when they talked about the children in their estates. They did not want their children to play with those rowdy, aggressive and violent young men and women.

Muumin, a father of 3, talked about seeing in the (local) children many ‘negative things’ and mannerisms that he cannot accept. He thought

these problems arise from 'excessive freedoms' which these children had. He criticized in particular what he saw was an atmosphere of permissiveness in school where teachers were either unable or unwilling to discipline unruly youngsters.

"In my culture, apart from the home and the society - in terms of inculcating in the child what is right and wrong, it was the school that created decent values in the children. The children used to be afraid of the teacher and avoided all kinds of bad behaviours in his presence, both inside and outside the classroom. In here, whereas we wanted the pupil to gain decency, and respectability, and progress, they gain the opposite: they come with impoliteness.... Thus all of these things made me worry about the future of my children."

Muumin, father working as security guard & living with wife and children in the London Borough of Haringey, arrived in the UK in 1990.

So what did the parents do to head off the threat, as they saw it, of losing their children to the streets? In my view, they seem to have operated, wittingly or unwittingly, a three-pronged strategy. The first strategy was Somali parents' high educational values and aspirations for their children. Regardless of education or occupational background, all the parents were aware of the importance of education to the future success of their children. Even those who have themselves had little or no formal schooling strongly believed in the importance of education.

Despite suffering from a considerable levels of disadvantage linked to their refugee status (compare Enneli, Modood, & Bradley 2005), these parents demonstrated a very positive attitude towards education and a faith in a better tomorrow for their children. All the parents were quite explicit about wanting their children to go to university, a somewhat idiosyncratic overambition "in view of the precarious circumstances of many of these families and their lack of familiarity with the outside environment" (see Portes & Rumbaut 2001:105).

According to Carola & Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (2002:150), some immigrant parents, especially those escaping very poor and violence-ridden countries, come to believe that their children are succeeding in school simply because they are able to attend school daily without the interruptions brought about by warfare or lack of funding. They go on to say that because school is free and children are given books and sometimes breakfast and lunch, this may be perceived as positive proof by the parents that they live in a bountiful country where opportunities will be provided for their children (*ibid.*, p. 150).

Both accounts explain, in my view, the position of the Somali parents I interviewed in 1997. As they arrived in the UK, safe from the horrors of war in Somalia, they became intoxicated with the prospects that schooling in the UK would provide good education for their children. When asked what kind of job would they like their child to have when he/she grows up, all the parents hoped to see their children become doctors, lawyers, economists, or other university graduates.

In later interviews, parents displayed a more sober understanding of their position and that of their children. As knowledge circulates through immigrant networks, parents are better able to understand the finer details of the education system and the schools that their children attend (see Carola & Marcelo Suárez-Orozco 2002:122). That said, their values towards education and their high aspirations for their children did not diminish.

That led to family resources and family strategies being used to translate the high parental expectations into educational successes for the children (see Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters 2004:21). While most parents were positive about the schools their children attended and thought they were doing well, some expressed concerns that their children have not been challenged in their new schools. Yet parents across the spectrum of views were paying for extra tuition for their children. Both teenagers preparing for GCSE and A-level examinations as well as primary school aged

children were tutored. The main subjects of tuition were English, maths, and sciences. At the end of Nov. 2008, for example, 4 school-age children of Abdi's were receiving private tuition at the cost of £80.00 a week and the family was prepared to continue paying for this service until the children left school.

Word has it that Somali parents and their children from across London, and from outside London as far as Birmingham and Bristol, are flocking into one private tuition centre in North London run by a Pakistani national, especially over the weekends. Because of their large family size, some parents are said to be paying up £100s every week to give their children extra learning support.

These reports are consistent with immigrant optimism hypothesis (e.g., Kao & Tienda 1995). According to this theory, most immigrants are determined to be successful in their country of destination, and their sense of purpose and optimism is directed towards their children (Hirschamn 2001:334). The latter, especially those who came as small children, will have the best of both worlds: they have the advantage of mastery of English and growing up in American (read British) institutions, but they also inherit their parents' positive attitudes about their host society and determination for upward mobility (ibid., p. 319).

The second strategy used by Somali parents to keep their children from acculturating to a different value system was organized religion, in the form of Islam. Islam symbolizes how Somalis define themselves and explain the world around them (Lewis 1981; Samatar 1994; Abdullahi 2001). Almost immediately after arrival in the United Kingdom, they set up mosques and *madrassas* for their children in apartments, then houses, and after some years, they bought or leased buildings for prayers or religious teaching. Now, a decade and a half into their exile, there are Somali-owned mosques and *madrassas* in almost all the areas they live in the UK.

In the interviews, parents are reaffirming their Islamic faith and tradition, and invariably want to extend these to their children. They do this by taking the children to the mosque for prayer on a regular basis. They also take them to a *Madrassa*, an Islamic theological seminary and law school attached to (or separate from) the mosque. These institutions offer after-school religious instruction to Muslim children who attend school in the day time. While the range and quality of instruction available in these institutions are variable, the main courses taught include memorization of the Qur'an (or Hifz, in Arabic), Tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation), Shari'ah (Islamic law), Hadith (recorded sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad), and Muslim History, etc.³¹

Nearly all the parents would take their children to these institutions to learn the Qur'an and the core values of the Islamic faith. Some of the parents would have liked to see their children attend full-fledged private *Islamic Schools* which combine secular and religious education but they could not do so mainly on grounds of cost. Others expressed a strong preference towards exclusive socialization and education in Islam for their children. Here is an excerpt from Muumin's interview transcript:

"The things that I would object to be taught to my child include the kind of education that is not based on religion, especially so-called sex education etc. These should not be taught to our people who are believers. ... Even those other lessons such as music that are not essential for us ought to be excluded from the school curricula. Let anybody who specifically wants it, have it if there is a personal choice ... I do not see things like music as important.... We must look at what the students want, what the parents like for their child to learn, and what the pupil has a capacity to learn. The things that are not valuable, or not liked by the parents ought to be abandoned. Because there are so many people in this country, one could find people whose hobbies are music, arts ... drama and the like. There are also people who do not like them because of either religious or cultural reasons, and who prefer to have other more important subjects. Thus ... issues have to be weighed up as to what each group wants, parents are to be asked what the pupil wants ... that is what we would like to have ... For example, Islam is presently taught at school. It is

quite possible that a non-believer who does not believe in Islam is teaching the children on this subject. We, myself and my children, are not confident at all in what that teacher is teaching. It is not Islamic ... I now think about private schools whether they are Islamic, or others ... and intend to have my child enrolled in them, God willing. ...”

Muumin, father working as security guard & living with wife and children in North London, arrived in the UK in 1990.

That was in 1997 and Muumin is now far more sober and realistic. In fact, he has been running his own education charity which helps some Somali families and their children in the North London area with IT, literacy and numeracy. All of Muumin’s three children have done well at school and went to university.

But there are Somali parents who are still strongly intent on having separate Islamic education for their children. There are anecdotal reports of parents switching their children from mainstream schooling to Islamic schools all the way to GCSEs. Some of these schools, it is said, are not even properly constituted or registered with local authorities. If these reports are true, then it seems that anyone can set up shop and call themselves an Islamic school. Yet leaving aside their value for money in terms of education, I hear most parents are spending an outrageous amount on them.

Recently, in the area of north London, a single mother with four children who was on benefits and received a total monthly benefit payment of around £800 was said to be paying up £400 per month towards her two primary school age sons’ Islamic school fees. Two years later, she was said to be close to mental breakdown when she was asked to remove them because she couldn’t afford to continue paying the fees. These are difficult examples and, inevitably, raise many questions: would these children be following the subjects taught under the national curriculum in schools? Would they be gaining the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding required for each subject? If that is the case, fine. But if that is not the case, then is the parent (or the children, for that matter) being taken for a ride? Whilst I have

no way of answering these questions, I can only say that this mother is motivated, like every other parent, by a desire for a better future for her children.

The most important object for the parents I interviewed in 1997 and again in 2008/9 was to protect their children from the worst aspects of British city life. Mothers in particular strove very hard to become a source of aid and comfort for their teenagers. Regardless of education or occupational background, all mothers took their children to the mosque and/or to after-school *madrassa* primarily for prayer and religious learning. Both girls and boys were sent to these institutions, which were also expected to foster values focused on learning and education.

In addition to providing spiritual support, in the view of these parents, the mosque and *madrassa* would give the children a sense of identity and belonging; would shore up parents' ties with other parents; and would also reinforce parental values (compare Waters 1999). The latter stressed education, stability, hard work, and striving for upward mobility. The key factor appears to be the combination of connecting both parents and teens to social networks that reinforce their values and attitudes as well as the moral and cultural reinforcement these institutions provide for the messages parents give to their children (see Waters 1999:202-3).

It would be a mistake to conclude this subsection without the contribution from one very successful young man in the group on the need for Somali youth to learn and retain key elements of their culture of origin as that will provide a template for success:

I think the biggest problem young Somali people have in this country is lack of identity ... and that lack of identity comes from (a) because people don't know what their culture is, and (b) a lot of them won't speak Somali. If you don't speak Somali then that means you don't know your language. And if you don't know your language, it means that you don't know your heritage, history, culture – all these

things, and that makes you empty. You don't have a base or something to fall back on. ... in my experience, the more they are Somali and have their Somali identity intact, the more successful they are because they have identity, they have something to hold on to. ... all the people that I know including lawyers, other doctors, accountants etc. are people who are highly rooted in their Somali culture and are very much a Somali person. They're very much connected to the community; they know what is happening back home; they follow the politics and the troubles back home. The ones that I see have failed to achieve anything are those with the least *Soomaalinimo* (least rooted in Somali culture, ways and behaviour). And if there was any advice that I would give to the authorities in this country whose business it is to assimilate immigrants to become better citizens in the UK, I would have told them that the best course for making someone to become successful in this country is to help them become rooted in their traditional culture and national identity and that would help them get somewhere with their lives instead of trying to take them away from their own culture and identity and try to assimilate them into something they might never be. If you live in Newham and want to assimilate to British culture, British culture in Newham is underage pregnancy, teenage sex, Cannabis, etc. This is the British culture in Newham, but that is not the Somali culture. The young people in Newham who want to hold on to their Somali culture are more likely to be in education, to be working, and/or to be married. So, my view is, if they want to assimilate to British culture (as is practiced by other young people in Newham), they'll end up doing very little for themselves and possibly destroying their lives. On the other hand, if they keep on to their Somali culture and traditions, they'd probably end up joining the middle class. (Dr. Guuleed, m, 27).

The third strategy used by Somali parents was 'transnationalism'. Parents engaged in transnationalism in order 'to shield their children from the spiral of downward mobility in the face of economic disadvantage' (Lee & Bean 2004:227). The forms of transnationalism reported include the following: (a) parents sending their children "back home" for part of their education, and for 'social and cultural learning infused with religious values' (Levitt 2007:64); (b) parents sending or taking their children "back home" to get them out of a negative environment in the host country (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:53); (c) parents taking or sending an unruly child "back home" because they believe younger siblings are clearly at risk of learning from him and moving into the same lifestyle as him (two parents acknowledged having

done this); and (d) parents creating social networks and relationships across borders to maximize opportunities for their children (compare Smith 2006). There is also evidence of 'transnational activism' (Levitt & Waters 2002:19) by the young people themselves, such as sending remittances, maintaining social contacts, interest in homeland media and politics, and visits to the home country (for more on this, see chapter 7).

Finally, the group of refugee parents and their children who took part in this research were part of the first wave of refugees who were put to flight by the outbreak of the civil war following the collapse of the central government in Somalia at the beginning of 1991. In almost all situations of refugee flight, the initial, first-wave tends to be more urban and professional in background, better educated, and more fluent in English. Those coming later are more frequently from rural and nomadic backgrounds, with lower English proficiency, and with fewer skills directly transferable to an industrialized economy (e.g., Hung & Haines 1996; Segal 2002).

The challenges ahead, & Implications

Overall, there are many signs of optimism. Educational aspirations are universally high for the young people who took part in the study. Like many generations of immigrant children from a broad range of cultures before them, these young men and women have truly yearned for learning (see Weinberg 1997:11), and most are progressing well educationally. Some are also successful occupationally. Gender-wise, women are far out-surpassing men in educational attainment. Many of the young women in the study not only have higher educational expectations and attainment, they also aspire to higher status occupations than many of their male counterparts (compare Feliciano & Rumbaut 2005).

However, there is bad news around a sizeable number of young people that

is falling behind educationally. Some of the young men, in particular, have got involved with gangs and violence, and openly led a drug-dictated lifestyle. A corollary of this is the evolving Somali youth delinquency problems of the inner cities. In various parts of London and other major cities, drugs are increasingly reported to be the top problem among Somali youths, followed by violence and gangs (SYDRC 2009).³² While not giving any figures, Rageh Omaar (the Somali-born Television journalist) contends that ethnic Somali youth constitute one of the largest minority groups in Feltham Young Offenders' Institution (Omaar 2006:43). How big is this problem, and what can be done about it? Omaar does not say, but he accepts that 'social deprivation or alienation' were salient factors in any explanation.

There are, of course, other explanations too: individual variables (such as aspirations, self-esteem or depression), social relationships (such as parent-child conflict), socioeconomic background, peer or environmental influences, *and neighbourhood context* (see Stepick et al., 2001:261; my italics). But there lies the first challenge. How could one shield these young people from such spiral of downward mobility in the face of what Portes et al. (2005:1009) describe as "multiple problems of poor schools, street crime, the lure of drugs, and the option offered by youth gangs, all opposed to parental aspirations for educational achievement and occupational advancement?"

Here is the second challenge. According to Hermione Harris (2004:41), institutional racism and discrimination are stacked against the Somalis. The segmented assimilation model argues that the second generation young people who adopt inner city 'adversarial subcultures' will experience downward mobility, in part because high levels of discrimination will preclude the option of joining the white mainstream, even if they are highly acculturated. Joining the native circles to which they have access may be a ticket to permanent subordination and disadvantage (Portes & Zhou 1993). Will or could that be the position of a significant element of Somali young

people? And if they do encounter unequal treatment, do they develop anger and hostility toward mainstream British society or a desire to overcome the barriers they experience? (see Waters & Kasinitz 2010:102).

Apart from skin colour and ethnicity, an additional layer of disadvantage, especially one that sticks out in the current political climate, is the Somalis' religious identity as Muslims. The issues here are not dissimilar to those addressed by Kasinitz et al. (2008:270) in their study of immigrant children in New York. They suggest that since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the public debate about religious and cultural difference and immigration has focused on the experience of Muslim immigrants. As opposed to Muslim immigrants in America, they claim that Muslim immigrants to Europe have felt marginalized and discriminated against. The question for Somali young people in Britain is whether they will face systematic discrimination, thus hardening the boundaries between them and other groups and preventing assimilation (*ibid.*).

One area where the Somali community faces (and will continue to face) a huge challenge is youth unemployment. This is of course a universal problem, and there were recent media reports of youth unemployment hitting record high as a result of the economic crisis in the UK (e.g., Abrams 2009; Peacock 2010). A recent ILO report even suggested that youths were almost three times as likely as adults to be unemployed (Allen 2010). Somali young people face the additional barriers of 'institutional racism and discrimination,' suggested by Harris above. In my small sample, for instance, entry into the labour market was a particular problem for both males and females. Several young people were long-term unemployed. About seven were NEET, or not currently engaged in employment, education or training.

Their parents faced barriers to employment, including employer discrimination and lack of network ties (Bloch & Atfield 2002; Bloch 2004, 2009). The latter, immigrant networks, are likely to be modified by human

capital, in the form of skills, training, and years of education, and forms of social capital (Wright & Ellis 2001:84) which, on current trends, will be acquired by many in the younger generation. But will that be sufficient for them to succeed in the labour market? Or, as Muslims and black people, are they more likely to face economic disadvantage?

In addition to the questions and data needs described in the above discussions on Somali young people, I see some additional important avenues for further research. It is suggested that British Muslim women are the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labour market, with 68 percent defined as inactive and only 29 percent in employment (Bunglawala 2010:4). With Somali young women currently progressing well at school and entering higher education in droves (11 out of 14, or close to 80 percent of my sample went to university), how will that reflect on their participation in the labour market? How are Somali young people, both male and female, faring educationally and occupationally nationwide? And how will they relate to their immigrant heritage and to their parents' country of origin? (see Foner & Kasinitz 2007:281).

The implications of my research are not dissimilar to those arrived at by Berry et al. (2006), Portes & Rumbaut (2006), and Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova (2008). I concur with Berry et al.'s (2006:233) core message for young people to seek ways to follow the integrative path as much as possible. In their view, integration involves acceptance of two kinds of orientation in both the immigrant groups and the larger society. First, cultural maintenance should be desired by the immigrant community and permitted (even encouraged) by the society as a whole. Second, participation and inclusion in the life of the larger society should be sought by the immigrants, and permitted and supported by the larger society. As they aptly put it: "Clearly, a policy of exclusion, leading to the marginalization of youth, has nothing to recommend it as a public policy" (*ibid.*, p. 232).

But integration is contingent upon the support of the host society, Berry et

al. (2006:232) argue, and its adoption of policies that promote integration such as: (1) the provision of support for immigrant community organizations so that cultural loss is limited or prevented, their ethnic identity is sustained, and their way of life is allowed to be maintained and to thrive; (2) the development of policies and programmes that encourage the participation of immigrants in the daily life of the national society so that they do not remain isolated in their own communities or alienated from the larger society; and (3) the development of policies and programmes for the general population to encourage their acceptance of the cultural diversity that will follow from point 1, and the participation of diverse peoples in the life of the larger society that will follow from point 2. Public education about the value of diversity, and antidiscrimination and equity laws are appropriate vehicles for these initiatives.

I would also concur with Portes & Rumbaut (2006:369) that selective acculturation is the best course for ensuring the proper integration of the *children of immigrants* (my italics). In this context, I support their call for host society institutions to adopt 'a set of enlightened policies ... in promoting successful integration of young people and avoiding the worst consequences of downward assimilation'.

I subscribe to their views concerning the following: involving parents around the schooling of their children, and provision of adequate information about the means to support the education of their children; provision of incentives for coethnic organizations to create after-school compensatory programs to help the children overcome their educational handicap and to teach them about the culture and the language of their parents' country. Such knowledge, in the view of Portes & Rumbaut (2006:370), will help anchor the self-esteem of these children, neutralize the worst effects of discrimination, and foster selective acculturation. Compensatory educational programs are also necessary, they maintain, given the disadvantage that many of these children bring from home. I also support their call for the creation of accessible vocational courses for youths who have dropped out of school.

Not everyone can go to college, they say, and children of low-skilled immigrants, are particularly unlikely to do so. The vocational route offers an alternative to deviant lifestyles, providing both regular employment and opportunities for entrepreneurship (*ibid.*).

I also give my assent to Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2008:364) plan for a 'new agenda based on evidence and reason' to cultivate immigrant youth to grow up to become engaged and productive citizens. They claim that Europe's greatest postwar failure was its inability to incorporate a large number of immigrants who are increasingly segregated, disenfranchised, and disadvantaged in the new labor market. The marginalized children of these immigrants, they say, seem to be turning into a permanent underclass, 'one that is strikingly over-represented in the penal system ... that has also proven to be a fertile breeding ground for fundamentalist terrorism'.

Among the ideas they float are the creation of engaging and relevant schools; the recognition of cultural difference and diversity by the larger society; and the adoption of realistic language policies. They state emphatically that multilingualism ought to be seen as an asset, not a divisive threat, in a globalized economy. They also call for the building of community support centers where children of immigrants will have access to supportive after-school programs, mentoring opportunities, and community-based activities (*ibid.*). I support these ideas as they are the surest way of allowing Somali young people 'to constructively unleash their great potential' to the benefit of society as a whole.

Finally, at the start of this project, I have identified a number of questions that need to be answered, outlined some possible theoretical directions for answering them, and proposed some research methods (see Pruitt 2006:864). I then followed every step in the outline through to completion to capture the experiences of young men and women aged 19-28 and their parents who have arrived as refugees from Somalia within the last 15 years. Their lived experience, reproduced in their own words from tape-recorded

interviews, adds an extra qualitative dimension to existing research on the achievement of Somali young people in Britain. My hope is that the material contained here will contribute to the development of research agendas around this young and growing generation of Somalis in British inner cities, help to define the scope of the problems they face more accurately, measure their magnitude with renewed precision, elicit fully the appropriate policy and practical solutions, and close the gap in knowledge that prevails on this topic (see Donaldson 2008).

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Somalis are found in nearly every urban conurbation in the UK as they were 'widely dispersed throughout the country and across London' (Griffiths 2002:94). According to a recent UK government map showing where different ethnic minority language groups live outside London, Somali-speaking communities were found in Leicester, Nottingham, Norwich, Peterborough, Darlington, Gateshead, Newcastle, Bolton, Bury, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Glasgow, Brighton, Hastings and St Leonards, Southampton, Bristol, Plymouth, Cardiff, Swansea, Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Leeds, and Sheffield ("The asylum map of Britain and languages guide," Daily Mail, 5th June 2006). The map being a language guide doesn't say what constitutes a community in terms of numbers (say 500, 1000, 5000 or what?), but if one takes account of the fact that many Somali people speak other languages (in addition to Somali) such as Amharic, Swahili and even Arabic, then ethnic Somalis would be found in far more cities and towns than the ones listed above.

2. I use here the definition of racialization by Lewis and Pheonix (2004), as cited by Murji & Solomos (2005:13), who propose thus: "Ethnicity' and 'race' are about the process of making differences between people on the basis of assumptions about human physical or cultural variations and the meanings of these variations. This is what we mean when we say that individuals and groups are racialised or ethnicised ... [such] identities are about setting and maintaining boundaries between groups."

3. I heard this extraordinary figure (5 million Somali refugees abroad) in a television news report carried by al-Jazeera English during a vicious bout of fighting at the end of December 2006 which saw the weak Transitional Federal Government swept to power in Mogadishu with the support of Ethiopian forces.

4. According to Professor Michael Pugh of Plymouth University, up to 4,000 asylum seekers drown at sea every year as they flee persecution or poverty. He suggests that fear of terrorism and public scares about mass migration have led to more vigilant coastal patrols and an international climate that discourages captains from stopping to help small boats in distress. As an example, he cites the case of three German aid workers who were arrested recently after their ship, Cap Anamur, docked in Sicily with 37 African refugees they had picked up from an inflatable dinghy. The asylum seekers initially claimed to be fleeing from the stricken Darfur region of Sudan, but were later found to be from Ghana and Nigeria. See also "4,000 refugees believed drowned at sea every year," by Owen Bowcott, The Guardian, Saturday October 9, 2004; "Refugees die after being thrown in sea,"

by Rory Carroll in Johannesburg, *The Guardian*, Wednesday Sep. 17, 2003; "Migrants must not die at sea, Berlusconi told," by John Hooper in Rome, *The Guardian*, Wed. August 18, 2004.

5. Maggie O'Kane of *The Guardian* reports on the fate of Samira, a heavily pregnant Somali refugee in Leicester: "[One] evening, a brick came through her kitchen and landed on the table. By dark there were four locals prowling with two dogs at the back of the house. At 10.30 a voice started screaming through her letter box in a language she did not understand. ... Samira called the police and they took 2 hours to come while she hid with the children in the bedroom. ... [initially] when she arrived, a young man with two dogs who lived across the road began watching her come and go, heavily pregnant. He would let the dogs off the lead as she passed with her young children, aged four and three. He pushed a ball up his jumper to imitate her pregnancy. Then "Fuck off back to India" appeared in white paint on her window. ... After the brick on her kitchen table, Refugee Action helped her to move." "Vulnerable given a cold welcome to Britain," by Maggie O'Kane, *The Guardian*, Monday December 3, 2001.

6. These are: Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, 1993; Asylum and Immigration Act, 1996; Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999; Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, 2002; Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act 2004; and, Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, 2006 (http://www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk/resources/resource_details.cfm?iPublicationID=8).

7. The immigration debate is driven for the most part by the tabloid press. But the tabloids, according to Roy Greenslade, "don't seek to inform their readers. They don't try to be fair, let alone balanced. They don't respect journalism's first requirement: to tell the truth. They set out to mislead and distort. They whip up the mob. They appeal to the basest of human instincts." The Daily Express, for instance, ran 22 front page articles in a month about asylum-seekers, many of which stretched facts to breaking point. Its stablemate, the Star, ran a remarkable story which alleged that Somali asylum-seekers had stolen, killed and eaten donkeys from Greenwich royal park. The Sun also ran a front page which alleged that eastern European asylum-seekers had killed and eaten swans on the Thames. Again, there wasn't any evidence for this story. Some broadsheets have also been infected by this kind of prejudicial journalism. The Sunday Telegraph ran a story which claimed that six councils had banned schools from giving their pupils hot cross buns in order to avoid criticism from Muslim students. It was a totally false story which fomented racial tension. According to David Wearing, Prejudice and hatred is whipped up against a vulnerable minority. The authorities either stand back or actively pander to these prejudices, claiming to be addressing "legitimate concerns" and thus lending prejudice an air of respectability. These forces combine to create a climate in which abuse and violence *against refugees and asylum seekers* can flourish. 'Incitement to racial hatred,' by David Wearing, *THE DEMOCRAT'S DIARY*, Wednesday, March 30, 2005. Available at <http://www.democratsdiary.co.uk/2005/03/incitement-to-racial-hatred.html>.

8. The Economist introduces this phrase in an article, "Britain's Somalis: Muddled Minority," discussing the resettlement of Somali refugees within disadvantaged neighbourhoods, especially in St Mathew's housing estate in Leicester, and the difficulties they face compared with other minority communities in the area (Serena Hussain, "An Annotated Bibliography of Recent literature on 'Invisible' Muslim Communities and New Muslim Migrant Communities in Britain," undated paper available @ http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publications/Resources_Annotated_Biblio_0206.shtml

9. The term human capital in these contexts refers, according to Chan (2004:129), to language competence, education, occupational skills, and transferable work experiences. In general the more human capital a person possesses, Chan goes on to say, the more he or she will be able to take advantage of opportunities and overcome barriers that confront persons of non-European origins in settings where racism and nativism still exist.

10. For instance, Kyambi found that education levels among the new Somali-born immigrants were the lowest of the countries compared, with the highest proportion of people having no qualifications (50.1 percent) and the lowest proportion of those having a higher qualification (2.8 percent) (Kyambi 2005, pp. 89-90).

11. “Who is going to sweep our streets or clean our office lavatories? One thing’s for sure: it won’t be the true-born Brit who, too often, is tempted to idleness by a welfare system that encourages him to avoid work. Not while there is a hard-up Somali or Pakistani to do it instead. That said, there is a limit to the number of foreigners any country can absorb before terrible social pressures build up,” was the Daily Mail’s take on the Somalis doing manual wage labour (“Turning a blind eye to a social disaster,” the Daily Mail, 20th July 2006). But then the vitriol the paper hurled at immigrants and refugees knew no bounds.

12. The meaning of the ‘West’ has been shifting throughout history. Here it is used as a shorthand to denote the ‘developed and pacified Western world’ (Hobsbawm, 1999:127, cited by Colic-Peisker, 2005:xi), or the main target countries for immigrants and asylum seekers: the so-called ‘First World’ in Europe (‘Western Europe,’ now expanding into the EU) and the developed part of the ‘New World’ claimed by Europeans through colonial expansion in the early modern times (North America and Australia) (ibid., p. xi).

13. In this context, Mary Waters (2008:3) argues that comparative research has the capacity to enrich our theories of immigrant integration and to offer public policy options for promoting that integration. Yet there are many difficult problems in doing comparisons—including reaching similar definitions of concepts, overcoming different academic traditions and foci., and making data comparable. According to Clark, Putnam, & Fieldhouse (2010:9), different historical experience in Britain and the US means information on race and immigration is not just labelled differently, but is actually carved up in different ways. In their own words, “the risk, then, is not so much that *they (the Americans) say tomayto and we (the Brits) say tomahto*, but rather that we end up talking about totally different things — at which point, it really is time to call the whole thing off” (ibid.:9).

Chapter 2

14. The traditional definition of the ghetto in the U.S. context is of a residential district that both concentrates a particular racial or ethnic group and at the same time contains it, in that a majority of its members are forced to live there due to discrimination by the host community (Walks & Bourne 2006:276).

15. The Stephen Lawrence report recognized the existence of institutional discrimination in the police, and more generally in the public services (Macpherson 1999).

Chapter 3

16. I am referring here to, among others, works such as Zhou & Bankston 1998; Waters 1999 ; Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2005; Rumbaut & Portes 2001; Levitt & Waters 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2002; C. Suárez-Orozco, M. Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova 2008; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters 2004; Mollenkopf, Waters, Holdaway, & Kasinitz 2005; Kasinitz et al., 2008; and also Hirschman, Kasinitz, & DeWind 1999, and, Bean & Bell-Rose 1999. Many of these authors are what guides my current formulations of the project, the research questions, and theoretical and methodological issues.

17. These arguments emanate from the literature on longitudinal qualitative research (LQR) (e.g., Saldana 2003; Neale & Flowerdew 2003; Farrall 2006; Holland, Thomson & Henderson 2006). Whilst I do not make a claim that this part of my research represents a qualitative longitudinal research, I think it would be far to say that it is not a cross-sectional research either. In the former, researchers ‘return to interviewees to measure and explore changes which occur over time and the processes associated with these changes’ (Farrall 2006:2), whereas in the latter, data are collected at a single point in time (Johnson & Christensen 2008:585). In this project, I tread a path in between these two paradigms.

18. All names of individuals reported throughout the thesis are pseudonyms.

19. To some, 7 years may not represent an ideal time for a child to acculturate. For instance, Kasinitz and colleagues (2002) included in their study [for the purposes of representing the full range of children of immigrants] people who were born abroad but arrived in the United States by age 12 and had lived there for ten or more years. Foner (1979), though her study was about adult Jamaican migrants in London, required her respondents to have had lived in England for at least 10 years (p. 15).

Chapter 5

20. The IPPR (2007) report on the economic profile of Britain's immigrants presents, among other things, the gender distribution of immigrant groups. The gender breakdown of the Somalia-born immigrant population in the UK, according to this report, is 38% male and 62% female. Similarly Kyambi (2005:89) has gender breakdown of immigrant groups in her study. Of the new Somali-born immigrants, according to Kyambi, 59.1 per cent are women.

21. In my research, I was astounded by the unwavering support of the young women who took part in the project. All of those I approached, with no exception, freely and voluntarily gave me their interviews at the first opportunity. In the case of males, the story was different. At least 3 young men from my old parent interviewees refused to cooperate or give me interviews initially. In the end, two young men were persuaded to change their position when their 'spoke in a level voice' with them. The third one could never be persuaded by anybody, and had to be left alone.

22. Hirschman (2001:320) goes on to say that the children will also be socialized into host society culture without having a firsthand experience of growing up in another country. Now one may ask the question: what is wrong with having a first hand experience of growing up in another country, and how would that disqualify someone from socializing into a host society culture? But leaving aside those questions, there is in fact conflicting evidence about the whole notion of age at arrival. For instance, in his research on the academic achievement of adolescents from immigrant families in America, Fuligni's (1997:353) evidence was that students' age of immigration was unrelated to their academic achievement, and that the amount of schooling they received in other countries did not have a strong influence on their performance.

23. Interestingly, in this study, half of these young people who grew up in single-parent families have still made it to university.

24. In Valentine et al.'s study, a survey was administered during class time to all pupils in years 7, 9 and 11 in eight Sheffield secondary schools and one further education college. This provided a large database of responses allowing the comparison of Somali respondents' affiliations and identity practices with those of children from other minority ethnic groups and white majority children. The qualitative stage of the research included in-depth semi-structured interviews with young Somalis and their guardians selected to represent different arrival scenarios, etc. The research also included an international dimension involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with young Somalis and their guardians living in Aarhus, Denmark (<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/identities/findings/Sporton.pdf>).

25. One could argue that it is not surprising that Somali kids felt that they weren't treated any different to other children because these 'other children' (or a majority of them at any rate) are also black or from ethnic minority communities (see, for instance, Clark 2009). It is not that the Somalis felt well treated, this arguments goes, it is their feeling that they weren't any different (phenotypically that is) to these other kids (for a comparable discussion bearing on an American context, see Kasinitz et al., 2008:158). Prejudice against newcomer immigrants is, of course, the main issue here, and the Somalis are newcomers who mainly came over here since the early Nineties. In contrast, many of the 'Asian and black communities are now in their third generation and well established' (Asthana & Townsend 2006). According to Simon Blake of the National Children's Bureau (quoted by Asthana & Townsend, *ibid.*), there is a real vulnerability about the newly arrived

whereas children from the established communities had 'currency' because of the credibility around their clothing and music.

26. I followed this formula ($M=(n+1)/2$) to calculate the 'median levels of achievement' for both groups. I ordered the individuals from the one with the lowest levels of education (mothers who had no formal education at all) to the one with the highest levels (parents with university education) to find the location of the median. In the case of the parents, I had an odd number (17) so the median, expressed as $(n+1)/2=(17+1)/2=$, fell on the 9th observation of the ordered set, and falling on a parent with some post-secondary education. Exactly half the parents had less than 'some post-secondary school training' and exactly half had more. In the case of the young people, I had an even number of 26 so I took the average of the 13th and the 14th observation. Hence their median was (university education + university education)/2= university education (I used Dawn Griffiths' (2008:61-70) 'Head First Statistics' to calculate the median. For full reference, see the bibliography).

Chapter 6

27. All these authors have reported Somali academic underachievement in the UK in absolute terms. Rutter (2006), in particular, made comparisons between Somalis and other groups. In my view, her group comparisons are utterly unconvincing for they depict 'Somali underachievement' as something that has deep historical roots in the UK, and that is not the case. She also has not gathered data from a representative cross section of all young people from the various nationality or ethnic groups she referred to in her study (i.e. Congolese, Somalis, and Southern Sudanese). But even if she did, whatever method she used (i.e., surveys, interviews) can still reify ethnic groups and miss important differences in their conditions. In the words of Kasinitz et al. (2008:13), it is possible to read group comparisons as stereotypes or even racist generalizations [because] any reference to group differences makes groups appear more homogenous than they actually are. The young people that Rutter researched (like mine) would have belonged not only to ethnic groups but also to social classes, genders, social groups, and neighborhoods. Like all modern people, they had a multiplicity of interacting social roles and identities. But her effort in comparing groups will not make this apparent. Thus her comparisons would still not be meaningful (see Kasinitz et al., 2008:13). Besides, the facts uncovered in this research contradict her theory of 'Somali underachievement'.

28. I am greatly indebted to Mollenkopf et al. (2005:481) from whose outstanding article, *The Ever-Winding Path: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Transition to Adulthood*, I borrowed this subtitle.

Chapter 7

29. The term diaspora was originally used to refer to the dispersal of the Jews from their historical homeland (Bercovitch 2007:18). I use it here to refer to Somalis who had been forcibly dispersed and who are presently living outside Somalia, mainly in the West but also in the Arabian Peninsula and in various parts of Africa. According to Zlatko Skrbis (2007: 220), there are some key characteristics that members of diasporas have in common: (1) a sense of group identity based on ethnic self – and other descriptions; (2) a sense of banishment from the homeland (real or imaginary) and an accompanying perception of alienation from the homeland; (3) a belief in collective and individual mission, which may include nostalgic yearnings for the homeland and the myth of return; and (4) a continuing interaction with the homeland that can be either physical (through visits or telephone calls) or imaginary. I believe all of these traits are true of the Somalis in the diaspora.

Chapter 8

30. I think it is pertinent to note here some new figures just released, as reported by the Guardian, painting a bleak portrait of racial and social exclusion at Oxford and Cambridge universities. Figures revealed in requests made under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act by the Labour MP David Lammy show that more than 20 Oxbridge colleges made no offers to black candidates for undergraduate courses last year. The Oxford college, Merton, has not admitted a single black student in five years. Oxford's breakdown of its latest undergraduate admissions figures suggest that just one black Caribbean student was accepted in 2009. A total of 77 students of Indian descent were also accepted. The FoI data also shows that of more than 1,500 academic and lab staff at Cambridge, none are black. Thirty-four are of British Asian (see Jeevan Vasager, Education editor, "More than 20 Oxbridge colleges did not take black students," the guardian, Tuesday 07.12.2010).

31. The definition of *Madrasah* has been sourced from <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/madrasah>;

32. On March 30, 2010, as part of its campaign in the 2010 UK General Election, the Sun newspaper splashed on its frontpage the picture of two young black men it claimed to be Somalis, each holding a large heavy knife with a broad blade. Underneath the photograph was the frightful caption "Gang rule ... Chad and Mo ... show off their weapons". In the article by Nick Francis, the Sun claimed that Somali young men have brought violence and crime to the streets of the UK. "In crisp spring sunshine morning, on a bustling north London street and in full view of young mums pushing prams, we are brazenly handed four rocks of class-A drugs by two Somali gangsters," it claimed. As well as selling ecstasy and cannabis to the youngsters looking to "spice up" their visit to the capital, the article claimed, the Somali young men were also feeding the crippling addiction of thousands with harder drugs. These Somali youngsters, it was suggested, brought violence and misery to the streets of Britain. The Sun claimed that its coverage of the Somali gangs in the streets coincided with a shock new survey that showed how Britons felt let down by Labour's immigration record. Retrieved 3rd Dec. 2010 from <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/2912750/Sun-immigration-survey-day-2-Violence-on-the-streets.html>. However much this article had to do or not to do with it, the Sun finally won against the Labour Party in the 2010 general election.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Stores of Young Somali Women in London

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APPENDIX A

STORIES OF YOUNG SOMALI WOMEN IN LONDON

I present here the stories of 13 young Somali women whose ages ranged from 19 to 28 upon interviewing at the end of November 2008 to mid-March 2009. All of them are the children of my parent interviewees for the project. They arrived in the UK as children, mostly with their refugee parents, from Somalia at the beginning of the 1990s. My in-depth interviews with these young women provide rich detail on their lived experience; the variety of school experience they encountered; their time in higher education; their early labour market experience; the difficulties they faced and the resources they drew in order to progress. The majority of these young women appear to be on an upward socioeconomic trajectory on the basis of their parents' determination and energy, their own hard work, strong cultural values and outlooks, and their positive attitudes towards education and employment. These stories have also been used in the analysis chapters to help frame and interpret the overall results of the research. The stories are arranged in the same chronological sequence as that of the parents, and their numbering reflects that order.

1.1

Su'ad's story

Su'ad and her twin sister, Samiya (next story), arrived in the UK from Somalia with their parents at the age of 6 in 1994. The family settled in South London where the children started school. The parents split up soon

after arrival and the children were raised single-handedly by their mother. Su'ad doesn't think this rupture in her parents' relationship had affected her. At 20 years of age, she goes to university in London studying for a BSc degree in dietetics. This is a 3 year course and Su'ad is in her 2nd year. She says she officially finishes next year, but would like to carry on doing her Masters degree so that "I can do what I like straight away". Su'ad lives at home because that is 'a religious and a cultural thing to do', but it also gives her some 'sort of structure to live by'.

Su'ad identifies herself as "Muslim Somalian British" [in that order] because, she says, she was born a Muslim, and in Somalia. She is also British but, "to everyone else I am just a Muslim because it is obvious". The 'obvious' refers to her wearing the headscarf. Women wearing the headscarf are being negatively stereotyped, in her view. But then she adds: "I don't think people mean to stereotype, but they do in some way. It is not their fault, and it is not your fault. It is somebody else's fault, the media's fault may be, and politics". Su'ad says she wears the headscarf to try "to incorporate my religion in everyday life". She also wakes up early mornings to pray.

Su'ad has friends from across the racial and ethnic groups, including Jewish friends, Jamaican and African friends. The main influence for her choice of friendship, according to Su'ad, comes from the schools and colleges she went to. Unlike most Somali parents who, she says, "like to tell their children stereotypes such as 'don't hang around with Jamaicans' because they get into drugs and stuff like that," her mum taught them from an early age that "there are different cultures so we shouldn't be in one culture".

Su'ad and her sister went to an all-girls' Catholic school which had good ethos and was also educationally good, she says. Whilst the school put emphasis on religion, according to Su'ad, "they didn't put their religion on us". Su'ad's mum was asked to bring in evidence of her faith commitment by way of a letter from the local imam and when she delivered the letter, the

girls were admitted into the school. The mother put in a lot of effort for the twins to go to a school outside the area in which the family lived. Schools in the neighbourhood were not very good, says Su'ad. So going to a better school outside of the area gave them "more of a head-start than most children from the area". Although mum's English was limited at the time, according to Su'ad, she managed to help the children at home with their school subjects, and also provided for them a private maths tutor. She also purchased educational aids for them, in the form of books, videos and other stuff.

For me, Su'ad says, "it's always been an ambition to go to university and that is why I am doing it". She finds fault with Somali people's attitudes towards young people, and especially young women: "I think the problem facing Somali young people is the attitude in the community saying that you're either in education or you get married and have a family. If you don't do either, then you're a bad person. And when you get education and grow a bit older to 24 or 25, 24 is not even old but to them (the community) it is old, then they say "oh, blah! Blah! So and so: your daughter is not married? (too old to not have married by now). My daughter has 16 children". Laughter ... That is what Somali people are like and you can't seem to win. But it is better to do what you want to do as opposed to what other people think".

Su'ad thinks young people ought to get education, skills, and qualifications and to make something for their lives before getting married. This is how she puts it: "I'd like to think I like this. If I were to have a child and to get married, do I wanna end up in a Council house? I live in a Council house at the moment. Loads of people think it is sort of offensive if I say I don't wanna become like my mum. Well, my mum had a job before coming here. She had a stable position in society (back in Somalia) but she had to leave because of war. It is not her fault. I don't wanna be like 'ooh, she grew up in England but she lives in a Council house', you know. I wanna do better for myself. If I am gonna have children and if I am gonna get married, I don't

wanna be financially, I don't know, in a bad place later on. It is very normal for a Somali woman just to marry men, raise their children on benefits (as) their husbands go to work. I don't think that is a bad vice [sic] but I don't want that on me, personally”.

1.2

Samiya's story

Samiya, like her twin sister above, is now in her 2nd year at university. She is doing a BSc (Hons) degree in Osteopathic Medicine at one of the ‘top accredited providers of Osteopathic education in England’.

Samiya is such a conscientious and dedicated student that she soon rises to the top set in her class despite enormous obstacles, including struggles with a new language, low-income single-parent household, and less than optimal initial school experience. This is how she puts it: “Because I came to England when I was six years old, when I first began school I wasn't up to date ... [inaudible] I was a bit behind. But it was in high school that I caught up a lot. First I began at the bottom and when I was in year ten, they set me up to do the GCSE foundation papers. And then I worked, and they told me: ‘oh, what! If you tried a bit harder, you could do this for your coursework’. I stayed after school and did what I could, and then all of a sudden I found myself changing from foundation to the higher set. So I think it must have come quite quickly after the little bit more work I've done”.

Samiya talks of a mother who places a particularly high value on education: “I am very proud of my mum because she started college at level one ESOL (English for Speakers of Other languages), and then now she is actually finished doing ICT (Information and Communication Technology) standard level 3. It is a Diploma in ICT. And that is like she's passed entry level 1, level 2, level 3, beginners, and then diploma 1, diploma 2. So that is like six

levels she's completed, and she began going to college, I think, when I was in year 7. So that is she's been consistent, she hasn't stopped ... [inaudible] and that's helped me when I come home. Basically my mum used to be an educator as well (in Somalia). She is a very like education-driven person so she sits there with a dictionary and asks me words. If I didn't know those words, she'll have a Somalian/English dictionary and she goes through that and then I understand what I am asking her. And now because she's taking an English book, she knows past, present, past tense, past past, past participle. And she would ask me: how do you know it isn't wouldn't, and it would be would! And I'll say, I don't know. What talk is that? And she'd say: do you know the reason why? But she knows it much more than me because she's learnt it in a grammatical way but I just learned it from kids speaking at school".

Indeed, the mother was very skilled and effective in directing the academic attainment of her children. Here is Samiya again: "... my mum bought video tapes for £150 and you get books; and people in the company will send you questions. At the end of every week, they will set you a module to do, and you get the tapes, and you'd watch the tapes, and then my mum would turn the video tapes off. The next week, we get questions like the ones before, and then she'll send them off. They'll mark it and bring them back so that you know how you're doing. My mum would set us time, say one hour, for us to do the work rather than let us cheat".

In Samiya's view, young people who do not do well at school have simply not tried hard enough to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed: "Say like they have done badly. People think, I've done bad at this point and they stop. That stopping is just adding to the problem and making the person a bigger failure. Rather than just waiting idly by, why don't you jump and weigh your options. Am I happy where I am; can I talk to someone; can I persuade someone to help me; Can I get a job; they just think 'oh, I didn't get what I needed to get and what I expected and they just stop. They're looking for an easy way out; they haven't tried hard enough."

For Samiya, girls have the values, attitudes and skills necessary for academic success so they work harder than the boys. She puts it thus: "I think educationally the girls are doing well. I am not sure about boys ... It is not only the family structure that is different in Somali families. You could have loads of brothers and sisters and can still do your work at home. It is because the females all have to play up to the females' role in the house which is doing almost everything to do with domestic chores whereas the males do 'I can go out any time I want, I can come back anytime I want'. And I am lucky enough I don't have that in my house. ... I think girls are more emotionally attached to family priorities. Boys can just go and come as they want, not always but the majority of times. But girls are spending more time with their family. They know their mum's situation and the financial difficulties the family faces routinely. Whatever there is in the house, girls are aware of the position whereas boys come and go. Girls are more emotionally attached to situations. Boys will forget things easily. Boys are like gold fish, and girls are like elephants. We remember things for a long time. If I do badly, I'll remember it for ages. We ruminate about situations past, but I'd like to say that we also learn from them".

2.1

Fahmo's story

Fahmo is a young woman with great beauty and grace, and a captivating smile. But at the age of 22, she is not in employment, education or training. Her parents are at a loss to understand what has become of their daughter, and are concerned that she might be at long term risk of remaining disengaged. According to her mother, Fahmo lacks all interest in life. She spends long periods in front of the TV and, as a result, feels passive, tired and less able to do anything else. Seeing her daughter "in such a state of abject misery" is causing the mother so much anxiety and distress.

Fahmo, for her part, says that she went to college in South London after leaving school. There she started a two year business course, but found it difficult and dropped out. She then chose another course which was about health and social care. Again she found it difficult and again dropped out of that course too. She then tried to retake her old English and maths GCSE courses but, in her words, "that too didn't work". Asked about why it "too didn't work," she said: "I was going there for one year, and I didn't pass on anything". After that, Fahmo stopped going to college.

In the interview I conducted with her, Fahmo spoke both in Somali and English. But she didn't sound terribly confident in either of them. I mean confidence here in terms of using well-developed language skills with good vocabulary and grammar. Because of this, Fahmo struggled to describe her experience at school and beyond. From what she said, she was fine in primary school. However, at secondary school she began to experience increasing difficulties. There were concerns expressed to her by some teachers about her poor performance: "In my GCSE year, the teachers said that I couldn't take GCSE exams because it was too difficult for me to do them." Asked as to whether the teachers ever said why she couldn't take the GCSE tests, Fahmo had this to say: "They said her understanding wasn't good. They just said it was difficult for her and it wasn't suitable for her to take the GCSEs." Fahmo received extra help with lessons at school along with 'other girls from Afghanistan and some Arabic girls who were in the same position' as hers.

Fahmo also talked about being bullied at school. This is what she had to say on this topic: "I got bullied at school most of the time. They (the kids) take the piss because I didn't speak proper English. They would say 'Somalian', and stuff like that. ... They were mainly white people. ... They (the bullies) are scared of the black people, so they take the mickey out of the Asians and Somalis. One of my Asian friends got beaten in the toilet. They would pinch my *Hijab* and put it in the bin. There was a fight between me and 3 girls (2

white and one black) at one point and I had to have some stitches at the hospital. Because they attacked me, they were excluded from school. But then that didn't help either, because they became more brazen and bullied me even more inside the classroom. They would throw things, like papers and trash, at me inside the class. They'd pull out my chair as I try to sit down so that I'd fall on the floor."

Moreover, Fahmo was the subject of social services action when she was at school. Her parents accuse the social services of over-reaction, and say that they cannot understand why a minor problem would become magnified or distorted by social services who decided to take their daughter away from them. Here is Fahmo's mother, Muhibo: "It wasn't a big punishment at all. It was a simple slap and a verbal rebuke. ... It was in her Year 10 when this happened. That day, she went to school. But we learned that she was in Croydon with other girls. Croydon was just too far away from her school, so we knew she didn't go to school. I went to the school myself and saw her teacher who told me that she wasn't there. Now because I knew that she wasn't at school, but also because she was seen hanging around Croydon with other girls, I had a go at her when she came home on that day. She came home after school wearing her uniform to feign that she was at school. I told her off for not going to school. But I also gave her a slap, once. The next day, she called the police for me. ... I was arrested and taken to the police station. I can't say for how long, but I was in custody for an hour or so. I was provided with a solicitor and an interpreter. But the social workers insisted on taking her away. The girl herself said that she is sorry for what she did, and would be happy to come home with me. Even the solicitor said my daughter should go home. But the social services would have none of it and, instead, put her into a foster home." Fahmo was in foster care for a while. Then the social services offered her a flat, but she refused to take it up because she wanted to go back home to her family rather than live on her own.

At some point after leaving school, according to her mother, there was a huge change in Fahmo. The likeable normal girl she knew became inactive, isolated and detached. She took refuge in watching TV. This is how the mother puts it:

“Fahmo used to be an active girl who goes to school/college, come back, help cook the food, clean up, and do all the routine domestic tasks. But she’s changed. She’d just laze around nowadays. She goes to the toilet and stays there for 2 hours. I am so surprised by the change. She’s physically deteriorated and lost appetite. She’s not interested in boys; she’s just not interested in life at all. She doesn’t even sleep. She’s in front of the telly when she’s not in bed. Some while ago, I took her on a 4 week holiday abroad. When we returned to the UK, she looked good and went back to college. But after about 2 months, she returned to her old sloppy appearance and then to her old self. I’ve now decided to let her travel abroad again to stay with relatives for a break. I’ll then see what happens after she returns to the UK. I am a parent and I want to do right by my child so I’ll do all that I can for her.”

Indeed the mother went out of her way to comfort and please Fahmo by taking her on holidays abroad on at least four occasions. However, Fahmo’s lack of success in anything so far has very much dented both her self-esteem and her motivation to a point whereby she is either unable or unwilling to do anything for herself. Asked whether she ever tried to get a job, this is what Fahmo had to say: “No. Because they have asked for qualifications and stuff, and I don’t have them. So that didn’t work for me as well. I can’t be bothered with these things. I’ve had enough. It is too hard.”

Fahmo was never assessed for a statement of special educational needs. However, her mother is now too worried that Fahmo may be suffering from some form of a learning disorder or even a psychological illness that is interfering with her attempts to make a satisfactory life for herself.

3.2

Iftin's story

Iftin arrived in the UK at the age of four in 1993 with her mum and two brothers from Somalia. She was the second eldest child and the only girl in the family. Ifitin and her brothers lived in a single-parent household for almost five years until their father arrived in 1998. From then on, the children lived under stable, intact two-parent family.

Iftin was abroad in North Africa with her mum and younger brother when I conducted this interview with her over the phone. They went to North Africa in 2005 for 'educational purposes' because, according to her mum, "the children weren't doing well at school in the UK".

Iftin demonstrated resilience and promise for success in education from an early age. According to her mother, Ifitin had the desire, discipline, and dedication – the will to succeed from the first day she started school in the UK. She devoted more of her free time than her two brothers to learning activities such as going to the local library, reading, and generally working hard to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for academic success. She was never late to school, would finish her homework and never waste her time.

While Ifitin sustained her high initial optimism and motivation and continued to work hard on her studies, the secondary school she went to was not facilitating her academic progress but was rather undermining her confidence. Here is Ifitin describing her experience at secondary school:

"When I was in primary school, I used to gain a lot from school. I used to enjoy going to school. But when I reached high school, I went to the worst school in our area. And there wasn't that many ethnic minority (pupils) so they didn't know how to serve the Somali people that went

there or the Asians. There weren't any teachers that you could go to who will help you. I don't know if I gained much from high school because there wasn't really much there. Academically speaking, my grades dropped because the standard of teaching wasn't even that good. And we used to have like three teachers. I remember when I was doing my GCSE maths course, I had three different teachers during a two year period. And every new teacher that came didn't know what went before so whenever we had a new teacher, we had to restart the course. That meant we couldn't finish our course work in time. We weren't prepared for our exams when we got our third teacher which was at the end of March. He tried to teach us as much as he could in the last two months but it wasn't good enough I guess."

Despite her best efforts, according to Iftin, the outcome was not good. "I didn't do well because I got Bs and Cs", she says. Iftin then went on to a local Sixth Form. But there again her test scores went down. In her own words: "I was in that Sixth Form for a year before coming to ... North Africa, and I didn't do well because I got Bs and Cs. Also it wasn't the best experience that I had".

Already at that point, the family had to contend with Iftin's older brother, Said, underachieving, falling with the wrong crowd, and doing nothing after leaving school. Said was sent to Somalia (see Said's story, Appendix B) whereas Iftin and her younger brother was taken to North Africa to be privately educated by their mum. The father stayed behind in London to support financially both his family in North Africa and his son in Somalia.

Here is how Iftin describes the purpose of their going abroad for couple of years: "Two reasons as to why we were taken to ... One was to learn more about the religion, may be to study Islam and to study Arabic, and the other reason was me and my brother (Colow, 16) to get education. Since we've come to ... we realized how important education is because a lot of people here can't afford to pay for school. You see a lot of kids walking around,

working as dustbin people (rubbish collectors). When you go to school, all the Arab children are so focussed. They always aim for A*. When they get a B grade, they actually cry some of them. It actually made me more dedicated towards my education, and more focussed so I benefitted. Its' done a lot for me, and I am grateful for the experience".

Iftin is very happy to tell us about the fruits of her labour in North Africa: "The first year I decided to retake my GCSEs, the ones that I got C grades (in the UK) which were the science subjects, maths and computing. I managed to get good grades in my retakes. I got 3 A* and 2 As. In the second year I took my A levels, I have got As in most subjects, so far I got As in Biology and Chemistry and I am waiting for my computing results which is gonna be out in January (2009)". I can update this to say that Iftin gained A grade in computing.

Iftin applied for a university place through UCAS at the beginning of 2009 whilst she was still in North Africa and secured an unconditional offer for a BSc course in Biomedical Sciences to start in September 2009 at a top London university. Upon completion of this course in 3 years time, she intends to study for an MB BS (Medical Degree) through the Graduate Entrant's Programme (GEP). She mentions Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry as one possible institution where she might be able to do this course in the future.

In a recent telephone conversation, Iftin told me that she attended an induction day at her new university in early July 2009 and met other members of the newest Biomedical Science course, including three other Somali girls. Inductees were given a guided tour of the university together with an overview of the course and how it is structured, she says. She is very much looking forward to starting in September.

At the conclusion of this thesis in Dec. 2010, I can confirm that Iftin is in her second year Biomedical Science studies at university. She recently has

had work experience at the Neonatal Department of a large teaching hospital in South London.

4.1

Nafiso's story

At 27 years of age, Nafiso is married and has a five-year-old daughter. I talked to her at her mum's house where she was living at the time of this interview (3rd Dec. 2008). I now understand that she secured her own accommodation in March this year (2009), and has since moved out of the family home. Nafiso's husband and the father of her daughter has returned from America at the end of June 2009, and is now living with his family in their new home in Northeast London.

Nafiso arrived in the UK with her family (her mum, 2 brothers and a sister) from Somalia at the age 11 in 1993. The children grew up in a single-parent household because their father never made it to the UK. He "disappeared" at the beginning of the civil wars in Somalia, according to the mother. Nafiso is the oldest child in the family. She finished school in 1998, and went on to do "health and social care" courses in a local college. She then started "a midwifery course at ... University, but somehow I didn't continue with it".

Nafiso got married at the age of 18 in the year 2000 to a cousin who was living in America at the time. She then went to live with him in the U. S. for the next 1 ½ years, returning to the UK in September 2002. Her husband also came with her as she returned to the UK so that they could live together. The husband worked as a bus driver in America, but needed a work permit to do likewise in London. Unfortunately, he couldn't get that work permit due to a legal technicality. I understand that, as someone married to a British citizen, he would have been entitled to a visa (initially issued for a 2-year probationary period) that allows him to work without

restriction and to exit and re-enter the UK multiple times. However, this visa is issued with the proviso that you apply for it whilst still in your country of domicile. Because Nafiso's husband didn't apply for it while he was still living abroad, he was not allowed to work without restriction.

When they returned to the UK, Nafiso and her husband moved in with her family. The young couple then decided to move to a town in North East England where the husband had close relatives. Nafiso got a job as a nursery nurse, and they also secured a flat. But the husband could not get a job without a work permit. They had a daughter, their first and only child so far, in January 2005. Nafiso didn't return to work after the birth of her daughter.

According to Nafiso's mum, her daughter's family suffered racist violence and abuse during their time in the county outside London. But Nafiso refutes this saying that "they were only young white thugs laughing and sneering and, sometimes, throwing eggs at our windows". She says they were never threatened, nor physically harmed by anyone, and adds that "some of the people were even quite friendly".

Unable to get a job to support his family, the husband decided to return to his old job in America at the end of 2005. Nafiso returned to London with the baby to live at her mum's house. Since returning to London, Nafiso has not worked. She has not gone to college to further her education, either. She worked for only 16 months as a nursery nurse, and didn't return to her job after the birth of her daughter. Reflecting on these gaps in her employment and training, this is what Nafiso says: "I attended school and had some good basic education, but now after so many years out of it, I lost all of that now. My English is kind of dodgy now, and I can't express myself in English as I used to when I left college. I now want to return to it and, Inshaa Allah, I'll do everything now".

Nafiso accepts that all she has in terms of qualifications at the present time is the certificate from her health and social care course which she gained in her immediate post-secondary education. She now says that she wants to do “a one year access to midwifery course” and then restart her training at university to become a midwife. But that may not be as easy as it sounds given that her daughter is at school now and will be in full-time education this September. Also her husband has returned from America for good, and she is more or less a full-time mother and wife.

4.2

Dahabo's story

Dahabo, who is now 25, is single and lives at home with her mum and two brothers. She is the younger sister of Nafiso above (4.1). Dahabo arrived in the UK from Somalia with the rest of her family at the age of 9 and, like her siblings, grew up in a single-parent household. She identifies herself as “British African or British Somali” because this is where she grew up and spent most of her life. She has a large percentage of Somali friends and a smaller percentage of friends from other ethnic backgrounds, she says. Talking about how she formed these friendships, this is what Dahabo says: “Most of my Somali friends are from my high school, so I’ve known them for a while. Some are from college. I’ve also noticed there are more Somalis nowadays compared to before and I’m able to relate to them more”.

Dahabo works “as a part-time care assistant for elderly people,” a job which she has been doing “for roughly 22 months”. Prior to that, she did a similar job “with disabled individuals”. Dahabo finished school in 2000. She says she didn’t get the results she wanted in her GCSE exams, which meant that she “had to restart again in college”. This is what Dahabo says happened then: “I’ve taken a course in childcare for a year. As part of the course I worked in a nursery, but I didn’t enjoy it so I changed to a different course.

I'm now doing a level 2 BTEC diploma in health and social care and I have one more year of college left". She goes on to add "When I've completed this course, I will do a nursing degree so that I can become a qualified nurse".

This optimism by Dahabo about her future career path is not shared by her mother and her auntie who both point at her educational record of the past several years. They say Dahabo left school with no qualifications some 8 years ago, and has been going to various colleges ever since. She simply would not stay in one college or institution to finish her course, or train for some regular occupation. Dahabo's words mean little to them, they say, unless she can begin a course and carry it through to completion.

For her part, Dahabo says that she is determined to complete her education because it is only through "knowledge, skills and qualifications that one will get a good job [in the UK]". Asked about what she would like to be doing in 10 years time, this is how Dahabo responds: "In 10 years time, hopefully, I will be married and a qualified nurse. I also want to have my own car and I want to be an independent woman".

5.2

Nawal's story

Nawal arrived in the UK at the age of 5 in April 1993 with her mum and older brother from Somalia. The father was already here, and was the one who sent out for his family to join him in London (see Muumin's story, Chap. IV). Nawal comes from a deeply religious family with strong commitment to education. She has the good fortune of having an educated father who knows precisely how to guide his children through the education maze. His steady and firm guidance, combined with Nawal's extraordinary effort, drive and engagement, gained her entry into a top London university

where, at the age of 19, she is doing a BA Degree in English Language and Literature.

Nawal singles out 'identity crisis' as the main problem facing young Somali people like herself. Here is how she resolved it: "It is something you have to battle with daily, some people actually get the grasp of it early on whilst others are still confused by it, even during their mid to late twenties. I've faced this issue along with my friends and members of my family...you do feel very confused, and you question how you should live, do I go with the secular way of living? Or should I live as a Muslim? Should I stick with my Somali culture? Or should I adapt to my surroundings? If you don't choose to live an Islamic way of life and you don't stick to your Somali culture, you face being disowned by your family and you're no longer considered a Muslim...it's very confusing and very hard to balance...I don't really know much of the Somali culture, my parents inform me about it, but I still don't think I fully understand that culture. There are just a lot of contradictions. I chose to be a practising Muslim".

Indeed, religion plays a major role in Nawal's life. In her own words: "It affects every aspect of my life. It is a way of life and it actually dominates my life". It is perhaps not surprising that out of all the young women I interviewed (N= 14), Nawal was the only girl who was fully veiled. She was wearing a full black Islamic *niqab* with only a small opening for the eyes when I visited her at home for this interview. Talking about her wearing of the veil, this is what Nawal says: "I've started wearing it recently [when] I started going to university. I'm no longer a teenager and I think wearing a veil is more appropriate now as an adult and I've chosen to live my life this way".

Were there any issues at all? Did she find it okay to wear it to university? "I haven't really noticed anything. Some of my friends were shocked initially to see me wearing a full veil," was her reply. But also mimicking other people's 'dress-code' was not unproblematic for young Somali girls. Here is Nawal

again: "...many kids in our school faced cultural confusions...for example if a Somali girl dressed a certain way, people would say she's trying to imitate a different culture. Living in a multicultural society is hard at times; you can't adapt parts of other people's cultures to yours as people would mock you".

On a more serious note, Nawal recognizes her wearing of the veil may not be welcome news for her job prospects with certain sections of British society: "With me, due to my dress-code, there are certain jobs I can't apply for, but that's because I live in a secular country. If I was to go to Saudi Arabia, I may have more of a chance to get a job". The only thing I could say about Saudi Arabia, and this is borne out of my experience with the Somali community rather than from my research findings, is that far more Somalis would leave Saudi Arabia to come to the UK to live and work in here than the other way round.

But it is the theme of education and its importance for young people that runs through Nawal's interview more than any other topic. "Getting a good education is my first priority," she declares. Asked about how she thinks one can achieve success in the UK, Nawal replies: "The only way to success is to get a good education, [and] to get a qualification". How would she define that success for someone of her age? Again, Nawal puts it thus: "It is having a career...and that includes having an education and working towards getting a qualification". Nawal believes it is the girls that are doing better than the boys when it comes to success in education and jobs, but why does she think so: "I think that's because of the values and the beliefs of the women ...they try to implement these beliefs...they're more determined to be successful".

All Somali young people, both girls and boys, need adults who serve as "role models," according to Nawal. There is a prevailing atmosphere, in her view, of Somali children seldom seeing Somali adults who are successful at work or in education. This is how she puts it:

"I think the main problem is that ... we don't actually have lots of role models, it should actually be the norm to see someone who is successful in the family. It shouldn't be a one off. It's sad because in most families, the parents might have some education, but every parent should be successful, every parent should be out to work everyday ... but the children don't value their education that much. It's like if someone tells me to do something they can't do themselves, I wouldn't value their advice because they haven't done it. My auntie was a role model, as she was doing her PhD and she was the one that urged me to continue and focus on my education, to also get a PhD. When parents tell you to do your homework, to do this, to do that, you have to go to college, you think why? You never did it so don't tell me when you never studied, when you're not successful, so why should I be...if you see the family being true to their words, being successful, being determined, it changes everything".

In her own case, as her father tells me, Nawal began having problems in secondary school. She became too lazy to do her work, would skip school, and started going out with friends. This led to the local authorities getting involved with the family. Nawal was taken out of school for one year to be educated at home by her parents, in the words of her father, "to stop her from becoming delinquent and antisocial". Eventually, she was turned around. Nawal successfully completed school and then "took A-levels at college" to do various subjects including English, a subject in which she enjoyed and wanted to study at university. She passed her A levels with flying colours and went to university.

Part of that success belongs to her parents' steady and firm guidance, and their high expectation of her not to settle for anything other than their daughter doing well at school and going to university. But the other half of this success belongs to Nawal for it was her eagerness to learn and her persistence at school tasks which lead to her excellent performance.

6.1

Weris's story

Tall and elegant, Weris is a classical Somali beauty. Aged 23 years, she is a remarkably attractive young woman whose electrifying presence captures the room. But she is also an intelligent young lady, and her talents reach far beyond the realm of her inimitable looks. Weris is a nursing student at one of London's topmost schools of nursing and midwifery. She is working towards a BSc. Degree in Adult Nursing, and is due to finish her course in the middle of 2010.

Weris arrived in London at the age 7 in 1992. She was travelling with her 2 much older sisters, aged 14 and 17 at the time, to join their mother who was already living in the UK. The family settled in North London, and Weris was sent to the local primary. This is some of what she recollects about her earliest experience at school: "In primary school, I wore a little Hijab, and got 'Ooh, what is that?' It was pulled this direction; and it was pulled that direction by the boys, and I had got into fights and all kinds of trouble over it. ... [in the end] I didn't actually wear *Hijab* to school (she says this very softly so that her mum next door won't hear it). My mum didn't know it. Then I went to secondary school and pretended to wear it. And then I started wearing it backwards, forwards, and in all kinds of ways. It was here sometimes (pointing to her hair); it was here sometimes. Sometimes it was tied around my stomach; it was like convertible – Laughter; I wore it in different directions. It wasn't really *Hijab*". I believe Weris's rebellion against the Hijab may have partly led to her mother, 'being a very religious person', taking the drastic decision of returning her daughter to Somalia later on.

We shall come to that in a moment but, to put the record aright, Weris also has fond memories of school and in particular about her teachers. Talking about this topic, here is what she says: "At school we had understanding

teachers. Our teachers gave us time. We might not have taken full advantage of that, but right about now I wish I had because you don't get that ... Yes, our teachers gave us a lot of time with a lot of one-to-one. They built relationships. A lot of the children took that for granted. There was the occasional teacher that was a bit off, but the majority of them, even though that school wasn't known for being the best in the area, tried to be good teachers. They tried their hardest and it showed. We've even had them locked out of the classroom and used all kinds of noise and stuff (to annoy the teachers); that is how unruly were the pupils. But rather than having a go at us the next day, they were just quiet that way. They'd get into tears and all kinds of stuff, but our teachers really tried to teach us. The main thing about our school were the teachers. We didn't have that many other facilities. We weren't too bad but compared to other schools and mixed (co-educational) schools, we weren't the best. But the quality of our teachers should have made up for it".

Weris went to college after finishing school, but failed in some of her courses. That caused her great distress. It was at this juncture that her mother came up with a plan to take her back to Somalia. There are a variety of versions as to how this happened, but they all differ from one another. The mother's version is that Weris, being a big girl, decided to return to Somalia. She first travelled to a Middle Eastern country, and then moved to Somalia of her own volition. Once in Somalia, Weris liked the place and decided to stay. The mother also wanted her daughter to know more about her heritage country, culture and traditions, and it was all a success (see the story of Awralo Abdisamad Dhoorre and her daughter Weris, Chap. IV).

But this version of the mother is contradicted by a source close to the family. This source tells me that Weris, being tall, skinny and ravishing with an enticing look, wanted to become a female fashion model. In the words of this person: "Weris wasn't a young girl dreaming of the day when she will become a model, she was already in contact with top modelling agencies and was about to sign up with them." She just made a bad mistake when she

confided this secret to her mum. According to the source, 'Weris mistook her mum's politeness and nodding for agreement'. Being deeply religious, the mother was in fact blazing with righteous indignation when she learned that her daughter was even considering the idea of becoming a model. The mother then made her own plans to scupper her daughter's modelling ambitions, and acted on them right on time.

Weris herself mentions that she wanted to go into the fashion business, saying "I wanted to be something else, something to do with fashion, to progress and to go into London College of Fashion". She failed in one of her courses and wanted to drop out, but her 'mother got wind of this'. She says she was always a good child, but her mother doesn't think so 'because I am her child'. As for the travel, they 'were supposed to visit ... [a Middle Eastern country]'. The idea of going to a hot climate country sounded really good to Weris. Once in this Middle Eastern country, plans changed. Weris wanted to work in there but she couldn't because she had no qualifications. She needed a qualification and because of that they went to Somalia. This is how she puts it: "We had to go to Somalia so that I'd get a bit of education. You can apparently get into university in Somalia, and that would have been a lot easier for me. And the certificate I'd get from there would be appreciated by the ... [employers in this middle-eastern state] because they recognize the university (in Somalia) as such. So the idea sounded pleasing."

But what happened over there was a mixed blessing. She was initially shocked and found it very hard to cope, but realized later that she gained somewhat 'educationally' as a result of her experience in Somalia. Here is Weris describing her initial experience: "I went over there, and I was immediately taken to some sort of a boarding college. And then my mother had to leave (to come back to the UK) because she had things to do. ... I stayed in the boarding college but instead of getting education, it turned into something else. There were a lot of other young ladies there, and young boys who were there for something called *dhaqan-celis* (re-acculturation into Somali values, norms and traditions) and I hadn't ever heard of that before.

I said to myself 'this does not refer to me. This is not me. I am not that kind of person'. These kids have got (body) piercings over here and here, and got up to all kinds of mischief in all kinds of countries, Holland, Canada, America, everywhere. I was like 'you're really bad'. And the way they spoke to their parents was really appalling, and I was like 'I am not you; what am I doing in the same place as you?' ... I cried most of the time. I said (to mum), 'mama: I don't belong here'. Because everybody thinks I am like them when I am not. Also the place they were staying was part of an orphanage. We had another part that was separate, but we still went to school with the orphans. And education is different. It was quite baffling. Maths was just something else. Science was something else. I didn't specialize in those subjects. They didn't have art there. They didn't have media there. I was like 'what is going on here?' I did poorly in my science in GCSEs. My maths wasn't all that good. I got a C (in the GCSE exams) which was pretty good for me. So it was just baffling. I was taken into a sixth form there. Sixth form maths: try and get hold of that? Madness. Even the Somali kids there, I believe, didn't really know what was going on there. They, more or less, copied and pasted from the piece of paper to their heads. That is what they wrote in their exams".

Weris couldn't cope any more, and makes her escape from the orphanage. She says she has had enough; the understanding between her and her mum is gone; and she therefore decided to run away. This is what she says happened: "I wasn't doing too good at the time because I had what they call lazy eye (Amblyopia). It was affecting my other eye, especially with the heat. We had the *Qur'an* in the morning; we had such full days, especially the reading and stuff, and the heat. My eyes started to become affected. I had headaches all the time. ... Right about then, I have had enough. I told my mum that I've had enough. That understanding between me and my mum had more or less gone because there were too many middle men right about then. She was always travelling [and] never there for me ... [At school] they tried to whip me and I had to run away. I had to run away, get caught and then come back, all kinds of trouble. ... In the end it happened that I escaped, more or less. What I've really been through at the point was a big

barrier. I had a cousin who've come from abroad and had a bit of money. We (with the cousin) went to Ethiopia. ... Well, I'd had enough; I was speaking out. So I ran. By the time I reached Hargeisa (northern Somalia), my mum had found out about it. Within a month I was back (in London). And it was not spoken about. It was just like, 'Yes, I understand'. You had that, I asked. I had to do that. 'Just make something out of your life now' was mum's reply. OK! ... And by then I am 20. It was 3 years that I was there. I am not going to be a flock anymore. And from there on, I've gone to a course and restarted my education".

Indeed Weris had returned to further education immediately upon arrival back in London. She went to college to do an access course in health and social care. She also took up a part-time job in a DIY store whilst studying. She completed her course and went straight to university to start a nursing degree. She never looked back with regret on the pain she felt during her sojourn in Somalia. Asked about whether she thought her experience in Somalia helped her in some way, Weris replied thus: "Yes, I believe Somalia had a lot more positive than it did have any negatives. ... But I believe if I was here and I still have the same mentality as I do now, I would have been somewhere round about now. I'd have finished university now. I could be doing a lot of stuff like that. Those three years of my life have been somewhat wasted, yet not wasted because I don't think I'd have matured this much. I don't think I'd have been who I am right now".

8.3

Fardosa's story

Fardosa is a good-natured and cooperative young lady. At the age of 20, she has a job as a school support worker with a brief to support teachers 'in managing children with emotional and behavioural difficulties'. Fardosa regards her job as temporary, saying 'I won't be working there when I start

university'. She says she has taken a gap year just to get basic skills and work experience. Fardosa also gained 'work experience in two care homes, 3 primary schools, and one nursery'. Moreover, she has successfully completed a BTEC First Diploma Course in Health and Social Care levels 2 & 3, and hopes to go to university in Sep. 2009 to train as a nurse.

As I was preparing her story on Aug 13th 2009, I have contacted Fardosa over the phone for an update on the outcome of her university admission forms. She was very happy to tell me that she has been offered a place for a BSc degree course in adult nursing at a top London university, and that she was going to start in September 2009.

Fardosa identifies herself 'as Black African'. Such identity is very important to me, she says, 'because it gives me acknowledgement to who I am and where we came from'. She says she has got friends from various backgrounds, including Somali, African, Indian, and English. In her own words: "I can get along with everyone because I don't discriminate". She is modestly dressed but has her head covered like most other young Somali women I interviewed. She says religion plays a major in her life: "My religion keeps me under control, and it sets certain boundaries which I can't go beyond. It keeps me on the straight and the narrow path".

Fardosa was brought into the UK at the age of 7, and completed all her schooling in North London where her family settled upon arrival. She says she picked up the necessary skills for college from her secondary school. Teachers were helpful in providing academic support to students, she says. But she is also critical of them because they were unable to enforce discipline in class. This is how she puts it: "The teachers were very helpful and supportive in secondary school. It was an acceptable learning environment. But there were a lot of kids who were easily distracted and lacked focus when it came to their education. I think that was due to the lack of discipline in our school."

Her father helped her with homework. She also received private tuition for maths and English, and this was paid for by her parents. There was no conflict at all with her parents, she says. In fact, she talks about the support and guidance she received from her parents and how that allowed her to accomplish important objectives in her life and to avoid problems and potential pitfalls: "I think it's due to the fact that my parents have always told me to be wise and to choose my friends carefully, because once you follow the wrong people that's it".

She sees problems of drug taking and antisocial behaviour by Somali young people as a result of bad influence from friends and TV: "I think the main problems (affecting Somali young people) are the use of drugs and also being influenced in a way that is detrimental to them. Once certain people see something on TV or something other people are doing, they don't think about the consequences and how it could affect them or other people in their lives, they just go ahead and do it". Parents ought to pay attention to their children's progress in school, she says, but they also must regularly offer advice and guidance about proper forms of behaviour in society: "I think parents should be involved in their children's lives...they should talk to them and set boundaries so they know what's acceptable and what isn't. It is a confusing world, and you need a parent to tell you what's right and what is wrong, to protect you from harm"

That is why, Fardosa says, she still lives at home with her parents. She says her father, in particular, as an educated man, was very sensitive and adept at helping his children deal with the challenges of adolescence. However, even with the presence of such a helpful father, her older brother could not be saved from delinquency and drug abuse. Here is Fardosa again: "Recently, we've been having problems with my older brother, which had put a lot of stress on the family. It wasn't a nice environment to be around. He'd be in trouble all the time and it wasn't pleasant seeing him then, but now he has calmed down so everything is okay. ... He has spent a couple of months in jail, and that affected us. He never got the chance to complete his

GCSE's. The problem is he can easily be influenced so he would mimic his friends...he wanted to be the centre of attention. The problems started at around that age; when he was supposed to be completing his GCSE's, up until 21. He's now learnt to control himself".

As the eldest daughter in the family, Fardosa has close relations with her parents and gives them a helping hand to look after the younger children. She also acts as 'a role model for them,' she says, because she believes the younger group will learn from the older siblings' successes and mistakes. This is how she puts it: "I think young Somalis really need a structured programme ... For example, I take care of my younger siblings, and I have to be a role model for them, whatever I do affects them. If they see me being bad, they're going to be bad. If they see me being good, they'll follow in my footsteps".

As a young Somali person in the UK, according to Fardosa, you need education and relevant qualifications as well as experience. In her own words: "Education is number one. No one will take you on, if you are not educated". Success is to be able to provide a decent living for yourself and your family through education and hard work, she says. Asked as to what she would like to be doing in 10 years time, this is what Fardosa says: "Hopefully, by then, I would have had a degree. I'd also be working and married, with kids".

9.1

Suuban's story

At 28, Suuban is the oldest of the all the girls interviewed. She is a trainee nurse, and a part-time health care assistant. She is single and, unlike most other girls in the sample, lives by herself. She says she chose to do so for work and study purposes. She has good relations with her family, and

continues to help her mum at home with the younger siblings. She is also living not very far away from her parents. She says she simply wanted to be closer to work and that is why she moved out, but 'it was a mutual decision' between herself and her parents.

Suuban came to London at the age of 12 in 1992. Her own natural (i.e., biological) parents died in the civil wars in Somalia. Then her uncle (her current father in London) stepped in to look after her by lodging an application for family reunion with the Home Office for Suuban and his own children and wife to join him in the UK. That application was granted, and the family including Suuban arrived. They settled in North London.

Suuban went to schools that were 'associated with troublemakers'. But she wasn't easily intimidated by them, and was able to cope with all that they had thrown at her. Here is Suuban recollecting her experiences in these schools: "I went to two different schools. Because of the areas I lived, these schools were associated with troublemakers. I did see my fair share of trouble but I wasn't like the other kids [because] I wasn't easily intimidated. I did get bullied in both schools... The first time I'd experienced bullying was in ... high school. I was there for 2 years, I started in year 8. Whilst I was there I got bullied because of my faith. It was difficult, the guy that bullied me was Indian and you'd expect him to be more understanding but he wasn't, he had a problem with my headscarf and would pull it, one day he pulled it too far and I ended up hitting him. It did get me into trouble, but that was the last time. No-one ever bullied me after that. I then went to ... School – a school which has now become an academy. In 1996 bullying was a problem within the Somali community so there would be a lot of fights and trouble. I was more determined to pass my exams, so I concentrated on them, I did have problems but I never succumbed to them unlike my sister, she's more sensitive than me so if people gave her a hard time she took it too personally...I didn't pick fights but if anyone picked a fight I would defend myself which did lead to trouble".

Because Suuban had only recently arrived from a non-English-speaking country, acquiring the ability to function well in English was another big challenge she faced at school. Although her limited English did affect her, it did not stop her from learning or even excelling in some of her school subjects. She just approached her work with determination and energy. Here is Suuban talking about her struggles and achievements at school: “I wasn’t really expecting to get high GCSE’s in school. My main concern was to pass and to learn something, to graduate with something. I didn’t speak English and I wasn’t expecting to pass in 7 GCSE’s. [In the end] I did get 2 A’s. I got an A in geography and B in Drama and D/E in English and an E in maths. It wasn’t so much that the work was difficult, it was the language barrier which caused a problem. I sometimes found myself answering the questions in Arabic as I had previously started an Arabic high school and I was halfway through my first year when the war happened...a lot of the answers I knew but I had difficulty answering them in English. My main concern was to be at a balanced level educationally before I started college, which is why I retook my GCSE’s when I went to college and got a B/C average”.

Suuban simply cared more about academic success than her brother and sister who went to the same schools as hers but haven’t achieved much (see Jamal’s story, Appendix B). She reports that she was much more engaged in school, and always paid her full attention and concentration during classes. She worked very hard and, despite her limited English, overachieved. This is how she puts it: “Just because I had a language barrier it doesn’t mean I couldn’t achieve my ambitions. I still managed to get where I wanted to go, I’ve overcome the language barrier. ... I’ve achieved much better than I expected. I was expecting to achieve just enough to go to university, but I did achieve a merit for my foundation GNVQ, as well as B/C in my GCSE’s and good O-levels. I did an access course and I got a lot better than I expected. I thought I’d get 8 level 3s and all the rest in level 2, but I got 15 level 3s”.

Suuban says she was always motivated by a desire 'to go to university and establish a career'. So when she finished school, she made choices that would take her down her that route. Here she is, talking about her motivations and what she did after leaving school: "I was always motivated by the fact that I wanted to go university and to establish a career ... Post 16, I had to make choices that would allow me to enter university. I made the choices and my dad supported it. I went to college to study science. I started at a low level for my understanding. Even though I knew science, I had language difficulties. Whilst studying foundation/intermediate science I also took GCSE English and progressed from there. I spent about 4 years in college to get the right qualifications to start university. I also did psychology and maths at college, which all prepared me for the nursing course I wanted to take at university".

Suuban finished college in 2001, and 'went to .. [a university outside London] to study a 3 year BSc course in Nursing'. Unfortunately, she fell ill in her 2nd year and was unable to continue with her studies. But owing to her persistence, she managed to restart a new nursing course after several years of absence due to illness. Here is Suuban, explaining what happened: "I finished college in 2001, and went to university to study a 3 year BSC nursing course. I managed to do 2 years but then I got sick. In the summer of 2003 I went to ... [a European country] as part of my work experience for 3 months. Whilst I was there I developed an ear infection, which wasn't good as I have a history of ear problems. When I came home it got worse and I ended up in hospital so I wasn't able to return to university. As a result of that treatment they found out that my hearing wasn't so good and that had other effects such as losing my balance and concentration levels. Basically, it took 3 years for me to get back on my feet and to get used to using hearing aids. By then, the medical academics had completely changed so I had to start from scratch, and so I did. I reapplied for universities. I couldn't go back to my old university because it was too far and my health wasn't 100% at that time, so I had to stay somewhere close to home. I got offered a place at ... and ... [two universities in London]. ... started the course in

March 07 whilst ... started it in September 07 so I accepted a place at ... University. I'm now completing my second year".

Suuban is also proud of her employment record. She has done a number of entry-level jobs over the years, thereby gaining a copious amount of work experience. She criticizes other young Somali people who she met for not getting stuck in their jobs or courses and, instead, running away at the first hint of trouble. Here she is, talking about her experience of these jobs and what they meant for her: "People get what they put in, that's always been my experience. Over the years I've done a lot of jobs. I worked in a chemist, a DIY store, and I've done various part time jobs especially when I was out of studies. I also helped out at my auntie's internet shop as well as doing some volunteering work. All the things that I've done I've ended up getting promoted. The pharmacist I worked for 2 years still calls me to see if I want to work for her. I worked at a DIY store for 2 and half years. I started as a cashier and I got promoted after 6 months to work at a desk. Before I handed in my resignation they had wanted to train me as a manager. There were other Somalis that worked at the same DIY store. There was 6 Somalis initially, and only 2 people ended up staying. It's not so much that there's a major issue among the youth, it's the lack of effort displayed by some. The less effort you put in, the less you benefit from it. The course I'm doing now, there was a lot of Somalis doing the course, but if you look at the number in their second year you'd be surprised. There may have been 20 initially and now there is only 5 left. People don't seem to want to put in the effort, the majority of the Somali friends I've met over the years are mainly interested in pursuing the business or computing path. They may start a course but they end up leaving halfway through their second year".

A constant theme that runs through much of Suuban's interview is her claim that religion and spirituality are important in shaping her experiences as a young woman living in 'two cultural worlds – the world of her family and community, and that of the larger society'. Here is Suuban talking about how religion influences her life: "As I grew up, I got more interested in

my religion and that's when I started to meet a lot of my current friends. ... My strong faith probably comes from my family, because of the two different cultures we grew up in - Somalia for 10 years of our lives and the rest here. Our family doesn't really put too much pressure on us in terms of culture but more on our religion. Everything we do, everyway we behave, we learn from the Quran. We've learnt that we're supposed to act from religion". As part of her religious worldview, Suuban advocates that young people get close to their families so that, in return, the family can support them.

A no less important theme in the interview is Suuban's belief that success for young people like her is not about what they know but how hard they try. In her own words: "It doesn't really matter if you have the relevant skills or experience. It helps, but it is more important that you're willing to work hard, that you're reliable and responsible. Those are more important than anything else." Asked about what she would like to be doing in 10 years time, this is what she says: "In 10 years time, I'd probably be a specialist nurse in diabetes and I'd probably have kids".

10.1

Deeqa's story

Deeqa works as an Editorial Assistant with a publishing firm in London. She has a BA Degree in English language and literature. Her story and those of her sisters (Habboon, 10.2 & Zahra, 10.4) and brothers (Adil, 10.3 & Guure, 10.5) help illustrate how parental values and involvement in education can, against all odds, facilitate young people's academic and career success. Theirs is a large refugee family who arrived in the UK at the beginning of the 1990s. All the older children in this family (N= 5) have gone to university, and a majority of them have got jobs. Two younger ones have yet to finish their university courses and the youngest 2 of all are still at school, but are expected to follow suit.

Deeqa was 12 when she arrived in the UK. She came with her mum and siblings in 1993 to join their father who was already living in London. Mother and children lived in Germany for a few years prior to their arrival in the UK. The family settled in West London. Deeqa recalls her earliest experience at school: "I struggled a little bit at the beginning because of language barriers. I felt like ... people were speaking but I couldn't understand them. Of course, some of the teachers had a low expectation, but they didn't realize language is just a form of expression; it isn't a way of knowing someone's level of intelligence. I felt sometimes, they had their own idea of how well you would do if you weren't given a chance. They would assume you would struggle."

Deeqa went to an all-girls school where, she says, most of the pupils were good and discipline was not an issue at all. She describes her positive school experiences as 'gaining friendship, learning, belonging and having a structure everyday, seeing the same friends, and just having a purpose [in life]'. Her parents helped them with maths homework. They also hired an English teacher who helped Deeqa and the other children to improve their English language outside school hours.

Deeqa finished secondary school in 1997. She then enrolled in a college of further education where she took '3 A-levels in English, psychology and German, with the aim of going to university'. She achieved an A grade in German – a language she mastered during her sojourn in Germany. Deeqa says that she intended 'to become a writer or a journalist', and knew that she had to take that route for her post-16 education to achieve it. But also her parents' encouragement and support in every step of the way is equally undeniable, as Deeqa herself affirms it: "It was also expected from my parents to continue education and go to university, and that was also taken as a positive thing and a worthy cause to pursue. I didn't question it much. It was something I wanted to do and all my friends were doing."

Deeqa went to university and earned a BA degree. But then she struggled to find work mainly due to her lack of relevant work experience. Here she is talking about how hard she found to get a job: “At the beginning it was very difficult finding a job. I was unemployed for 6 to 8 months, just at home and not working. I did many interviews, sometimes you didn’t even hear back from them, you didn’t hear back from application forms. It was just a case of keep applying because I knew somebody would eventually give me a job. I found it difficult to secure a job after I graduated, as a lot of the jobs required you to have work experience but nobody would give you a chance. Sometimes, to get work experience you had to have prior interest which basically meant you needed to have work experience just to get work experience which is ridiculous.”

She says some people were saying that she didn’t get those jobs because she was black and she wears headscarf, etc. Although she might have been discriminated against in some of these cases, she says, she doesn’t believe discrimination was the motive behind her not being hired for these jobs. This is how she puts it: “There will always be people who don’t like you for various reasons, but I genuinely think my lack of work experience was the main barrier preventing me from getting a job ... The jobs I didn’t get I’m guessing there were more preferable candidates”.

Deeqa adds that because her subject (English language and literature) allows her to take many routes, she considered teaching. She also tried to pursue publishing, but found it difficult due to lack of experience. In the end, she had resorted to doing temporary jobs to make a living. In her own words: “After I graduated, I did a lot of temporary jobs ... I worked for a health commission, it’s a government funded community service. I also did a lot of admin jobs, just various jobs, just to get by until I found my current job.”

Describing the attributes she thinks employers are looking for when they recruit young people like herself, this is what Deeqa says: “Having

transferable skills such as good team work and working under pressure. They should highlight these skills, even if you're lacking the relevant experience, you should show them you're a quick learner and willing...I think it's something people underestimate, it's not always about the 'x' number of years you've worked at a company. A lot of people may not have the experience required, but if you know the skills you have and are able to highlight it then it should help. I don't think it's to do with education all the time, any type of work experience is vital, because not everyone goes to university so you need something that shows you're reliable, punctual, and trustworthy. Something to show you have initiative. I think it would be difficult to secure a job if you've been unemployed for 5 years just living at home with your parents. People will wonder what you were doing during that time. So, you have to have some kind of motivation, maybe parents should instil that in their children to do well and people should take it on board...but there are those who didn't have done and still managed to do well. I think it's a personality thing and maybe your background affects you to."

Deeqa supports the notion, widely held among many of my other respondents, that girls work harder than boys in the Somali community. This hard work is evident in terms of the girls' educational and occupational successes. In her view, the reasons for this are partly to do with the parents putting more pressure on girls than boys. Here is Deeqa, explaining this phenomenon: "I think the girls are doing better. It may be a cultural thing, but parents do put more pressure on girls and perhaps the boys get a bit more freedom. They're expected to be laddish...parents might be a bit more easier on them. ... Sometimes I think the mothers might be specifically targeting the girls and pushing them because they never had that opportunity back home, and here there is equality so they want their daughters to take full opportunity. I personally felt that you can achieve things as a woman...it could be a cultural thing, I'm not sure. When I was at university, in my campus there was 6 Somali girls compared to 2 Somali

guys, so there always have been more girls in higher education compared to guys...”

Asked her views as to whether the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person, this is how Deeqa responds: “Theoretically, yes. You should have exactly the same opportunities. But I think we have a lot more struggles to overcome, not just ethnicity, but some of us may come from broken homes or our parents may rely on us more heavily compared to those whose parents have their own homes or are retirees. We’re expected to financially help even distant relatives back home, and so whatever decisions we make we might have to consult a lot of people and it’s not as easy as doing what you want. And there is always your background, it’s not an excuse, but it may decrease your opportunities.”

Deeqa would define success for someone of her age in the UK in the following terms: “To have a job they enjoy, to have some sort of financial independence, maybe have a partner and looking towards settling down...seeing a bit of the world, doing something for yourself not just everybody else...obviously priorities change as well depending on your circumstances.” Asked about what she would like to be doing in 10 years time, this is what Deeqa says: “I’d like to take a PhD and maybe start teaching, getting a more flexible job. Having my own family, and if possible, living somewhere hot.”

10.2

Habboon’s story

Being a high achiever, Habboon is definitely the highlight of the group. At the age of 27, she is an immigration lawyer working for a top high street London law firm. She is single and lives by herself saying that she needs to

build her 'legal knowledge and experience' before settling down. She has worked for them for several years now, and found an area of law 'Human Rights' which she loves. She would want to maximize her performance in this area by seeking out opportunities which would allow her to shine. In the longer term, she aspires to become, not merely good, but an outstanding human rights lawyer trialling 'international human rights cases'.

Here is Habboon talking about her ambitions to become a high flying human rights lawyer: "What I really liked to get into since I was 13 was international human rights law. That has always been my passion. I fell into immigration by accident, but I must say I really love it, and I couldn't be happier with the job I'm doing right now. Having said that, what I'd really like to achieve is to work for a big NGO organisation like amnesty international or human rights watch, and help trial big international human rights cases such as genocides or... That's what I've always been interested in and passionate about so I'm trying to gear myself towards it ..."

Although her employers will provide training, Habboon says, she herself bears ultimate responsibility for her own professional development. To this end, she embarked on a Legal Practice Course (LPC) to prepare for the challenges of life as a solicitor. This training takes three years to finish when you are studying part-time which is how she is doing it. However, because Habboon has been working for the Solicitor's firm for so long, they have 'cut off 6 months from her training period'. She now has to do 2½ years training time and "fingers crossed, 15th of March 2010" is when she will become a qualified solicitor.

However, according to Habboon, success for a black or ethnic minority person is not without cost. She says 'identity crisis' as well as feelings of alienation and isolation are all associated with having a highly competitive job as a black person: "I think identity is a big one. I'm starting to find, but I could be wrong, that the higher up you climb, the less of your own people you start to see which makes it difficult and adds to your identity crisis. A

lot of it is from personal experience. I find that at my work place in my department, there are 40 people and 5 will be starting soon, and out of those 40 people there are only five of us who are not white middle class. And out of that five, two of them had a privileged upbringing. The way we kind of look at is that they sort of left their identity at the doorstep and have accepted the Caucasian way of life and adopted the way things are done at work. So, there are three of us who find it more difficult than the rest, because there's a lot of compromise about who you are and what you're bringing to the workplace. It saddens me because I always see the way we sometimes get treated different, I don't think it's a race issue, I know its human rights practice, but I think it's difficult to succeed without knowing who you are and what your background, culture and religion is. I think it's very easy to sell out and I think it's better to try and avoid it. I think depending on what type of jobs they go for, Somali youths will find it difficult. I think once the door has been broken, it's good to have some sort of network where people can gain support as it can get difficult sometimes. I've been working at the company for the past three years, and I know that there was a period where I was working every weekend and night, and it cut me off from a lot of my friends, and a lot of them unfortunately didn't understand that at that time the job came first."

Habboon arrived where she is through hard work, diligent application and perseverance. However, looking back at her own school experience, she is critical of the teachers' low expectations of the pupils. She paints a picture of Somali students, in particular, not expected to work hard, nor encouraged to work towards high academic standards: "I found that quite a lot of the teachers weren't very encouraging at all. They took a lot of us out of important classes and put us in 'English help' lessons, which I didn't find helpful at all. I remember when I was in year 9, there was this careers thing, and they'd ask you 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' and I'd always said that I'd wanted to do law. They did the same thing when I was in year 11, and again I said I wanted to do law, and they told me that I was being unrealistic and that I should aim for more realistic options in life. I

just felt like they really put us down, and they'd always encourage us to do less challenging classes, they'd tell us not to think about A-level's when we could do GNVQ's. The main thing that I think was negative at school was the different levels of standards that were expected from different students. If you were a Somali student and got a D, the teacher would say 'Well done, you tried very hard and got a D', and I don't think that was very encouraging. If other English students got a B or C, they were told off and told they could do better."

There are two major challenges to educational attainment and future career success by young Somali people, according to Habboon. The first one is making sense of who they are and finding a meaningful place in their new society. Some of them may be badly influenced by friends in their neighbourhood to join youth gangs or participate in the drugs subculture, and a majority of them face what she calls an 'identity crisis': "I think a lot of young Somalis have an identity crisis, which makes it very difficult for them to understand where they fit in as a race in the UK. It takes someone from a secure background, who knows who they are to be able to do that ... a lot of kids think because they're black, they must adopt the black culture in the UK, and unfortunately a lot of them mistake that with getting involved in gangs and trying to look tough. I think there's a lot of pressure on young Somali kids, which is really sad [because] a lot of them aren't taking the opportunity of the life they've been offered."

The other problem is that young Somali people are divided, along their parents' age-old custom of clan conflict, and can be actively hostile towards one another. Habboon also talks of the division between those who are very religious (some possibly radicalized) and those who are willing to integrate into society: "There's always negativity and conflict which makes it difficult for us to work together. I think we have an element of what our parents have had. I think tribes always get in the way with those who are running for leadership. That identity is still unfortunately being used. I think Somali youths or children are much divided. You have the very religious ones who

don't associate with other Somalis of the opposite gender and then you have the very liberal ones. It's very difficult for them to form some sort of middle ground and work together. I think we do suffer unfortunately from the same problem our parents may have had, although for different reasons maybe."

Habboon's advice to young Somali people is that 'they should take this great opportunity which has been given to them for free almost' to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for academic and occupational success. The main thing, in her view, is that young people ought to work hard on something they enjoy doing. As she puts it: "... if education is not for you, then do something else. As long as you're doing something in your life and you are happy and succeeding, then go for it".

10.4

Zahra's story

Zahra, age 24, is a younger sister of Deeqa and Habboon above. She is a registered nurse working at a University teaching hospital in a large city in the English Midlands. She is also married and lives with her husband, an engineer by trade who works in the same city as hers.

Zahra is very modest about her success, and sees her achievements as nothing out of the ordinary. She wants to go on and achieve more and bigger things in life: "I don't see myself as successful, I think I'm average...I would say I'm slightly successful as I graduated from high school, college and university and I landed a good job. I'm successful in terms of achieving what I've wanted but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop here, there's still lots of things I want to achieve...this is just a stepping stone, I'm still climbing up the success ladder."

Zahra expresses her gratitude for the opportunities she received in this country. But she says she heard views expressed by Somali females themselves that girls don't need much education because they will become mothers and housewives. She rejects these rigid ideas of gender roles and argues that girls and boys have equal rights to education in this country. She says girls will not be able to participate in the economic sphere or be able to develop their full potentials as individuals, if they are not educated: "I received an education which may not have been possible in Somalia ... [But] I've heard Somali females say that education isn't necessary, because at the end of the day, you'll eventually stay at home and become a housewife. You're in a country where education is free, so you should take advantage of it. You can't get a stable career without an education, I'm not going to say jobs because there are menial jobs that don't require an education... For me I got married whilst I was still in university but that never stopped me from completing my education and reaching my goals. At the end of the day, it's your life, your choices; no one can make decisions for you. You can actually have a job and solely pursue your education and career but you may not be fulfilled. So family is important. They (family and education) both tend to go hand in hand, but if you're a young person I think it's better if you concentrate on your education."

Zahra is of the view that lack of positive adult 'role models' in Somali families is partly responsible for young people not having the confidence and skills for work and for personal development: "The lack of role models within our family is a problem we have, there isn't a relative who is constantly pushing you and encouraging you to achieve".

In her own case, Zahra says she wasn't sure about which path to focus on, and what to choose for a career after finishing school. Nonetheless, she knew she wanted to work in a hospital environment so she followed her heart. Her parents were supportive although they wanted her to become a doctor, instead of a nurse. In the end, she followed her dreams, investigated the topic by doing some work experience and decided to train as a nurse.

Here is Zahra, talking about how she got to be where she is now: "I finished school in 2001 and then took A-level psychology, biology and health and social care ... I didn't know I was going to study nursing. I had no idea what I was going to do and that's why I picked those A-levels. I knew I wanted to work in a hospital but I didn't know what I'd be doing there. I like the hospital environment and it was my dad that suggested becoming a nurse. They also suggested becoming a doctor but I don't think I'm determined enough or clever enough to pursue that career ... I went to the college, looked around, did some work experience and I realised that I wanted to study nursing. It's good to know what you want to do beforehand. I also think it's good to get work experience in the relevant course before studying it. It would be time consuming if you took the course and failed because it didn't meet your expectations ... I studied at the University of ... for a nursing degree which I finished in January 2008."

On the first day of her job search, according to her mum, Zahra applied for 5 different hospital positions online. She was offered an interview for all the positions she applied for. She then went for all the interviews, and was offered a job 'as an adult nurse' by all of them. In the end, she settled for the job in the Midlands where her husband also works.

Asked her views about the chances of success for a young Somali woman as opposed to a young Somali man in the UK, Zahra maintains that boys can easily fall into temptation and a snare. Somali boys get into too much trouble these days, she says. Many of them join gangs and start dealing in drugs. Somali girls, on the other hand, are a success story, and they owe their success to their hard work, industry and application. Parents also put more pressure on the girls. In Zahra's own words: "I think there's a lot of temptation out there for boys. There's also this stigma surrounding Somali boys, so when they're in school they may not try as hard [because] they're always told that they're doomed to be unsuccessful. There is also the gangs and violence which they're attracted to...and because there's a lack of Somali role models they tend to be involved in these gangs. I think Somali

girls are more mature, they tend to realise how valuable education is, and parents also focus on them more as they try to make sure the daughter doesn't bring shame upon the family. But when the boys misbehave, they are let off easily."

Does she think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person? This is how Zahra replies to this question: "No, the chances to success aren't equal [because] we didn't have it as easy. They had better foundations: they were born and bred here, they went to pre-school, they went to nursery ... it's their country. It wasn't easy for us. I had to overcome that language barrier. When I went to school I didn't know what 'no' or 'don't' meant. It all depends on the first few years of life. They had an advantage, so it doesn't make it a level playing field. A Somali can compete with a British person for the same job if they're just as qualified. Discrimination has decreased over the years but there will still be a small minority who will prefer the British person purely because they're white."

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APPENDIX B

STORIES OF YOUNG SOMALI MEN IN LONDON

I present here the stories of 12 young men whose ages ranged from 20 to 27 upon interviewing at the end of November 2008 to the beginning of November 2009. All of them, except two, are the children of my original parent interviewees. The two 'extra young people' (EXYP) interviewed have come from polar opposites in their past, present and likely future trajectories in their experiences. One is a hospital registrar and the other is an unemployed young man who ran away from school by age 13, only to get tangled up in a world of crime and class A drugs. I enlisted these two extra young men to the project because the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys in the original sample. By original sample, I mean the children of my original parent interviewees. Most of these young men, like their female counterparts, arrived in the UK as children with their parents from Somalia at the beginning of the 1990s.

My in-depth interviews with them provide rich detail on their lived experience; the variety of school experience they encountered; their time in higher education; their early labour market experience; the difficulties they faced and the resources they drew in order to progress. Some of these young men appear to be on an upward socioeconomic trajectory on the basis of parental determination and energy, their own hard work, their strong cultural values and outlooks, and their positive attitudes towards education and employment. Others seem poised for a path of blocked aspirations and downward mobility due to multiple factors, including family background, school and social context, and lack of individual talent and effort (compare Portes & Rumbaut 2001). These stories have also been

used in the analysis and discussion chapters of the thesis to help frame and interpret the overall results of the research. The stories are arranged in the same chronological sequence as that of the parents, and their numbering reflects that order.

3.1

Said's story

Said was six when he arrived in the UK with his mother and younger siblings in 1993. There were three children in the family altogether, and Said was the oldest (see the story of Amino Tifow Sabriye, Chap. IV). At the time of my interview with him (03.02.09), Said was a NEET. He sees his position largely as a short-term phenomenon, saying that he wants 'to go back to education and also get a job'. His parents, on the other hand, see Said's present status as a negative experience that puts him at a disadvantage and may lead to his future unemployment. They say he has fallen 'with a wrong crowd' of young people roaming the streets late at night and who may be involved in 'crime and anti-social behaviour'.

Said's mum recently called me and, in a fretful voice, told me that she found 'police papers' containing Said's details in his room. This turns out to be a police bail form, but Said simply refused to divulge the information to his mum. The mum just returned from North Africa with her two other children, and was tidying up his room which was 'very messy'. She also found 'stuff that was of green colour, and other things that had unpleasant and foul odour'. The mother was particularly concerned about the bail form, but there was not much she could do about it. I said to her that we simply don't know; and there was no point in speculating about what's going to happen. At that point, she became hysterical and began screaming.

Said was returned to Somalia by his parents as soon as he finished school in 2004 for this very behaviour of going out with youths who gather on the streets at night. He would not come back home until the next morning. According to his mum, that was something he did everyday as a matter of routine. In Amino's telling words: "We thought that we would lose him if we didn't bring some changes to his life, and that was why we decided to send him to Somalia." He stayed with Amino's mother and other relatives in Mogadishu for the next two years.

I asked Said what he was doing in Mogadishu in those two years. He said he was 'learning the Koran [Qur'an]', but there was not much else to do. Looking back, I asked him, does he think going back to Mogadishu helped him in some ways? To which he replied: "It helped me learn the culture. I got to know the family as well. Also my Somali language improved. And I saw like how it is in a third world country. So I think I've gained a lot."

Said spent seven months in a country in North Africa after returning from Somalia. His younger brother and sister were already staying there with their mum to prepare for their GCSE and A level exams. The mother tried very hard to encourage Said to do likewise so that he could have better prospects for education or employment upon his return to the UK. But Said refused his mother's wise counsel and returned to London to be with his friends. Although his parents think Said got wiser because of the time he spent in Somalia, they say the problem was that he went straight back to his old group when he came back to London.

I asked Said what he did after returning to the UK in the middle of 2007. He says he couldn't find a job because employers would ask for experience, and he didn't have one. In his own words: "An 18 year old would not have experience. ... And that is where the problem lies. If you look for a job, they'll ask for experience, experience, experience. If the job is not going to give you experience, who is going to give it to you?"

Said has no doubt his underachievement at school is where it all started. He also thinks that he should have stayed longer in education rather than leaving school at 16: "I'd say everyone had equal opportunity to learn (at school). The best thing about it was that everyone was immature (sic). You're at an immature state of your life so you wouldn't really pay serious attention at school. I think at 16, I was too young to leave school. May be if the British government were to make school leaving age by the age of 18, you'd be more mature. If the last part of the GCSE takes place between 16-18, you'd be more serious, you'd be more mature. But leaving early was not possibly a good thing for me (because) I didn't reach my best level."

Said thinks that people are biased against Somali boys. Somali girls have no problem, he says, but people and the White community in particular consider Somali boys to be a threat to society. This is how he puts it: "Hypocrisy... The girls are alright, but the boys – they think it is a white person and that (sic). *Gaalada* [White people] think that they're (Somali boys) trouble makers and that or they're not trustable. Especially the police and them lot, they don't seem to like the Somalians. So I think it is hard for a Somalian, from age 17 to 42, they're hypocrites or trouble makers (sic). They're in gang or they don't wanna do nothing with their life or something like that. That is not a good position to be in. I think it is very hard for the Somali boys."

Somali young people also encounter widespread racial prejudice in the streets, according to Said. This comes not only from White people but also from fellow African and black people. I asked Said whether he experienced 'racism' himself, and this is what he had to say: "I have seen and experienced it myself. I have seen people be racist because someone is Somalian and then they act racist against them. Not now but long time ago, like three years ago. Somalians in this area, they didn't used to like the Africans and West Africans so they used to fight each other: "You fucking Somalian," "Fucking Nigerian", this and that. ... Now it is like the white people and the police and the general public which is the white community,

they have a certain hypocrite view of the Somali youth. ... So that is what I see; that is the trouble these days.”

Said also alleges that Somalis are particularly being stereotyped ‘as people who are doing no good in society’ by the police: “In London the Somalis are seen as, not trouble makers, but from the police’s side, that they’re doing no good in society. Somali boys are always up to no good; that is what they say. They’re stereotyped that they’re gangs and this and that. And I have watched this on TV as well. So everyone has a certain bad stereotype (image) of Somalian in this British society, especially the boys.”

Said paints a picture of Somalis living in areas where violence and anti-social behaviour are commonplace. Both Somalis and other black people living in these areas face generalized negative and discriminatory attitudes, according to Said. In his own words: “I’d say there is discrimination towards the black people and there is stereotyping, basically hoody, gangs, street corners, the knife problem which is in the headlines now, and this and that. You have to watch out because if you get into a fight, you never know what (might happen?). The opposition might have a knife, he can stab you, or he may have a gun or anything. So you need to be very careful. ... When you’re walking on the street, you have to know who’s behind you, who is in front of you. You can’t just walk; you have to be on guard.”

The above racial stereotypes of the Somalis are often unfair or untrue, according to Said. He says “Somali young people make an effort to educate themselves, work hard and get a job.” Girls are doing particularly well. But also any boy who wants to achieve can also do so, in his view, because success depends almost entirely on how hard they work. This is Said talking about the girls’ achievement and what boys can do for themselves: “I have seen a lot of successful girls. But the boys are not. It depends if the boy himself wants to be successful. If the boy wants to be successful nothing can stop him. The teacher can’t stop him; (poor) grades can’t stop him. It depends on the boy himself; if you wanna do well, you can do well.”

‘Will you try to follow your prescription for success?’, was my question to Said at this point. His answer was ‘yes’, and added: “I can achieve it by doing an access course, and I’d hopefully pass that course which takes one year, and get a recognized qualification which can lead to further education like university.” The old adage ‘easier said than done’ comes to mind here!

As I write his story today (23.09.09, pm), I spoke to Said’s dad over the phone for an update on his son’s position. He tells me that Said had found a job at a bakery recently. He has had the job for about 4 weeks now. Said has taken up this job, according to the father, so that he can gain employment experience. It is by no means certain however, the father tells me, that Said will be able to hold down the job for long. So far he has called in sick for at least a number of days.

4.3

Mahad’s story

Mahad, age 22, lives with his mum and siblings at their Council house in North London. He has just started a degree course in business management and accounting at a top university outside London. He also has a job as Store Assistant at the Local Sainsbury’s where he has worked since July 2007. He tells me that he will ‘drastically cut down’ on his hours at work when he starts the course fully next week (01.10.09), and has already spoken to his manager about it.

In comparison to his siblings, Mahad is doing very well indeed. The younger brother Rahman (4.4, next story) and Mahad, in particular, seem to be going their separate ways. Mahad’s own individual characteristics and peer context may explain part of the story (see also the stories of their sisters above, 4.1 & 4.2).

Whereas Rahman had been drifting toward local youths 'with shady dealings', Mahad, not only avoided involvement with these gangs, but has also maintained 'strong values', traditional religious outlook, and a positive peer group fellowship. Here is Mahad talking about his friends, religious values and how he avoids trouble: "So mine are good friends who are in the same stage of life as me ... we recognize things together [for] we are from the same background [Somalis]. It is easier to mix with your own type of people so to speak. I do have the odd occasional friends who are [from] outside of my race, obviously that is also very good and very important. ... May be I don't socialize with them outside my workplace or outside the classroom. But still I would consider hanging out with them. ... Personally religion plays a very important part in my life. I have strong values as part of my religion. I think in today's world youth are struggling hard because of lack of religion. Religion gives you focus, it gives you a discipline, it gives you, how can I say, rules to implement ... If you look at the media and certain people, they say religion is a backward step. I think that is where we are taking a backward step by not using it [religion] in our lives. And I use that [religion] very much in my life day-to-day. I try to pray as much as I can. I try to respect others, not swear, no listen to anything bad, not watching something bad. I keep out of harm's way as much as possible even though it is very hard for a young guy like me living in a Western country. [I] go to the mosque every Friday. I try to just get my head right, and I think when the head is right everything goes well together. And I'd say that comes from religion."

Because Mahad wasn't joining their ranks, 'certain thugs' in the neighbourhood started routinely harassing and taunting himself and other members of his family. These harassments came to a head when one evening, a group of hooded young men (mainly black and Turkish), shouting racial epithets against Somalis, raided the family house with metal bars and base ball bats. They broke down the door and started smashing up the furniture downstairs. Mahad, who was upstairs at the time playing games with his friend, jumped from a first floor window to escape them. His friend

hid in a cupboard. The assailants racially abused Mahad's shocked mum and sisters who were in the kitchen before running away. They left behind a trail of broken glass and furniture wreckage strewn across the floor in the hall-way, kitchen and living room. Apart from Mahad who sustained multiple, but minor, fractures to one foot and badly bruised his arms, legs and back, no one else got injured. The police have moved the family for their safety, and they had to stay away from their home for the next two months. The family is convinced they know who was responsible, but claim the police have not done enough to catch the thugs.

It took Mahad nearly 3 months of rest and physiotherapy before making a full recovery and being able to return to normalcy. Yet, in his modest description of why they visited their racist violence and abuse on his family, he is disinclined to show hostility or animosity towards these thugs: "Yeah ... we didn't agree with them so they did just what they do which is, you know, hanging round the corners. They tried, you know, to harass us. They tried to bully us, they were throwing things at us ... insulting our religion or whatever. Each day is different, you know. Yeah, racist taunts being thrown at us "go back to your country," and a lot more mixed in it. I can't even verbalize it. You will be extremely surprised to hear what they said against us. Yeah, things that you don't want to hear ... They didn't like us and, you know the consequences of those things, if you stand up to certain thugs, and misbehaving people, you face their wrath by yourself. I think that has changed our lives, and it has been tough to get through that. But yeah, we came through it quite well."

Indeed, they got through despite the difficulties they endured. Mahad restarted his college education and has landed a job. At college, he took GNVQ courses in business and maths. He achieved what was possible to achieve, he says. In his own words, "I didn't get that distinction and I was disappointed, but you know considering my circumstances I have done quite well and that gave me confidence [because] I have completed a 2 year course."

At work, Mahad exerted himself mightily to do his job. He says he proved to be a hard worker willing to devote his own free time to the task and that is why his manager will keep him even as he goes to university, albeit with reduced hours. But Mahad is too ambitious to want to stay in his current capacity at the job. Asked about his long-term goals in the job, this is what he had to say: "I think it is safe to say that I don't have a long-term goal at that job. I am just doing it now out of necessity to make ends meet. My future lies, I would say, well away from that. Long-term, I see myself not in a supermarket for I do have higher aspirations. May be If I wanted to be in that supermarket, I would probably consider being the manager of the supermarket with the qualifications that I am getting (aiming to obtain), but anything less than that, I would say, wouldn't come into my aspiration. I want to aim higher by getting good education, if I want a supermarket job – a checkout person for example, I wouldn't need qualifications for that. I could just apply for it and get it, but that is not highly motivating for me. I want to reach my full potential (through education), and that is what motivates me."

The theme of 'education as the key to a better tomorrow' is paramount in Mahad's conversation. He views education as the route to meaningful economic opportunities in the UK. For those with low levels of education and skills, he says, the odds are that they are going to fail in this society. He is a firm believer in the idea of getting good education to get a good job and nothing, including marriage or family should come in the way: "I would define success for myself as reaching my full potential, adapting well to life in this country, and to get a university degree and my ideal job. Having a family is of low priority for me now because when I finish my studies and get a good job, things will fall into place. It will then be easier to support my family and kids in the future. But I think to say I'd go into marriage first, well that suits some people and some people can't do better but for me it will be hard not knowing my financial situation and what I can afford in terms of having a wife and kids, and a house and especially in the current economic

atmosphere. So I'd say getting a good job would be the basis upon which to build my family because I want to give my kids what I didn't have."

The same faith in education and work is evident in the rest of his interview transcripts. He says his experience stands as an object lesson to all young Somali people of his age. They should aim higher, and they should get the right information: "Speaking to many of my friends, they don't know where to go looking for a job, they don't know where to get the necessary training, they don't know where to go to learn the English language. So they're forced to go into a low-paid job which doesn't require much. Because of their lack of information, and because of their lack of direction, they think that is the only way they can get a job – to go for a low-paid job. But in fact there are other opportunities, but they do find themselves in that low-paid situation. This is a big problem for young Somali people in my area."

Asked as to what he would like to be doing in 10 years time, this is what Mahad says: "In ten years time, I see myself completing my university degree, being active in the business world whether I am setting up my own business or working for a big corporation as an accountant or financial executive ... I also see myself as having a family and kids, and hopefully back home."

4.4

Rahman's story

Rahman, age 20, spoke fondly about his formative years at school. He says he went to an 'ethnically diverse school' where about 135 different languages were spoken. Prominent among these ethnic groups were Turkish, Somali, and Jamaican. The teachers tried their best to educate the kids. They gave students homework and encouraged them to take school seriously. They also expected the students to work hard to learn. Rahman claims to have

left school with 'good decent grades'. He is also happy that he went to a school with such a 'rich and diverse' student population.

Although kids at school had friendships across racial and ethnic lines, according to Rahman, sometimes conflicts flared up between different ethnic groups. At the outbreak of such hostilities, students would commonly divide along ethnic lines: "Sometimes, due to the racial make-up of my school, conflicts did flare up. If an individual from one ethnic group had issues with someone from another, this would cause an ongoing feud between all individuals within those particular ethnic groups. There were a lot of conflicts/fighting in our school due to the grouping [antagonisms] between ethnic groups, and that was a negative."

A personal difficulty for Rahman was that there was no one at home to help him with home work. His mum was unable to offer support because she didn't speak English and could not understand the material. Rahman says getting his homework done and handing it in time was a huge struggle, but he learned to rely on himself to do it. On the occasions when he was unable to do it, he would try to get support from his older brother who was 'more academically oriented'.

At the time of my interview with him in the beginning of December 2008, Rahman was doing a Royal Mail Christmas casual. It was a temporary job for which he had to work a late-night shift covering a seven day week over the Christmas period, and the salary was £7.50 per hour. Rahman was happy with his 'little earner,' saying it gave him an opportunity to gain 'valuable new experience and to make new friends'.

However, this was not Rahman's first short-term or temporary job. As a Fitness Instructor/Personal Trainer, he has done casual work for various gyms across London since completing his training in 2006. This was a two year Fitness Instructor training course which Rahman undertook after finishing school in 2004. The course equips trainees with 'advanced level of

exercise and fitness knowledge'. Rahman tells me that he gained a recognized qualification upon completion of this course: "I left school in 2004, and went to ... College to start a fitness instructing and personal training course which lasted for two years. I now have a Fitness Instructor/Personal Trainer qualification. This is a Central YMCA qualification issued by CYQ (Central YMCA Qualifications), and it is a very well known qualification. I have a level 2 and 3."

But the economic benefits of such qualifications were largely illusory. Low wages and uncertainty about ongoing work made it impossible for Rahman to support himself. This led him to rethink about his whole life and to embark on a new course of study.

Rahman talks here about his change of direction caused by irregular income and persistent low wages over the years: "It was just actually this previous summer. I thought about where I was at that time and where I wanted to go in my future. I realized that, from what I have done as fitness instructor, I have been getting very low wages. The rates were just low, and I knew that I was getting nowhere with that kind of career. So it was just something I didn't want to continue with. I had casual jobs, but then the last job that I had was a contract, and it was pretty much full-time job. That was like part-time wages for a full-time job. It was a very low pay job. I was doing so much hours, at least 40 hours a week and I was getting wages that were almost the level of a part-time job. And that is what made me change my career thinking that in ten years' time if I am still working in gyms, then would I be happy with these very low wages if I had my family, children, home, car and all the things I want to have in life. Would I be happy getting paid with this pittance, and I wouldn't be happy with it so I decided to change direction in my career."

Rahman has gone back to college at the beginning of September last year (2008) to do 'an access to higher education business course'. He says he wants to go to university next year (2009) 'to do an economics degree'. I

asked Rahman how does he intend to satisfy the course requirements, given that economics is one of the most competitive courses and that universities will be looking for an excellent academic record? He replied thus: "My strongest subjects at school were English and history. I was okay with maths. I wouldn't say I was so good at maths but I was quite bright at it. So by now, my English is very good in the college. Also my science is very good. I am very good at adapting, and I also try to work hard. All these new subjects, and all the material and new information is available online. The teacher will teach us everything, and if you still don't understand it, there is actual help on the internet, and the teacher will also give help at an extra time. So there is really not an excuse for failing a course or finding it hard, you know. Everything is on the internet nowadays, everything is easy to access. It is how much effort you make that will give you the result."

As I was writing his story this morning (06.10.09), I contacted Rahman for an update on his prospects for entering university this year! He told me that so far the College hasn't given him the results of his exams on the courses he has taken. He says he failed in one particular subject and has retaken it, but the results had not yet come. There is also no information about the results of the other subjects. He tried to contact his tutor at College but couldn't get to him because the tutor was very busy teaching, and Rahman wasn't prepared to wait for 3½ hours to see him. Rahman also says that he went on to the UCAS (the admissions service) website and saw he still has a place reserved at the University of He has been offered a place, he tells me, on an 'economics degree course' which starts on the 10th of October 2009. But Rahman has yet to get his exam results so he can't be sure whether or not he will join the course when it starts next week.

The position that Rahman finds himself now, according to his mum, was predictable. Despite his high-flown talk of doing access courses and aspiring to go to university, according to his mum, Rahman is at risk of disengaging from learning and work. She says he couldn't find steady employment, and so he was moving in and out of casual jobs. She doesn't think that he is

serious about studying at all. She says that he is wasting his time spending with friends who are roaming the streets late at night. She admits that she doesn't know what Rahman and his friends are up to, but is unhappy about the fact that he often comes home after 3 or 4 am. She says she kindly overlooked his mistakes in the past, but she can't rule out the possibility that he may be having problems that go beyond not having a job or a career. Rahman shrugs off the concerns his mum expresses about his life style. He says he does what he wants to do, and not what his friends tell him: "I am my own person and I do as I feel. Sometimes I hang out with my friends, and sometimes I just chill out by myself."

I held a brief conversation with Rahman one last time when I bumped into him at my local supermarket one evening in the New Year. It was Sunday, 3rd Jan 2010. He tells me that he was very disappointed to not get the grades he'd hoped for, and also to not have gone to university. He also hasn't been feeling like doing any courses at college this year. He had a very short-lived Christmas casual with Royal Mail at a depot in South London. This was again a night shift between 10 pm to 7 am, but he got the sack after only 3 nights into the job. He was attacked by two Jamaican men who also worked in the depot; a brief but violent scuffle ensued. He says that he was merely defending himself when he came under attack by the Jamaicans. Another young Somali man, a co-worker of Rahman, broke up the fight. The female supervisor, who too was Jamaican, wrongly accused the two Somalis (Rahman and his friend) of starting a fight. A senior manager came on the scene, investigated the matter and dismissed Rahman and the 2 Jamaican males who, he says, attacked him. The other Somali boy was freed from blame and asked to go back to work. But he refused to get back to work in protest against Rahman's dismissal which he thought was unfair.

The hourly rate for this last Christmas casual was £6.50 as opposed to the one last year which was £7.50, according to Rahman, a sign of the recessionary pressures in the economy. Rahman tells me that he secured

another temp job just prior to Christmas. This new job is related to youth work by an organization based in South London, and Rahman expects to start work with this group at the beginning of the year. He says he doesn't know how long this job is going to last!

5.1

Farhan's story

Farhan, age 25, is a biology graduate. At the time of our interview (16.01.09), he was training to become a Legal Adviser with a Citizens Advice Bureaux. He also worked as a volunteer at his father's community education project in North London since graduating from university in July 2007 (see Muumin's story, Chap. IV).

Like most other young people interviewed, Farhan did not speak a word of English when he started school upon his arrival in the UK at the age of 10. Coming from a country where the education system has been decimated by years of warfare, he has never been to school before coming here. Thus English-language difficulties, he says, presented particular challenges in his initial school experience. But rather than succumb to these difficulties, Farhan made good use of his talent. He seized the opportunity of going to school for the first time, applied himself harder, and flourished in his new school environment. Here is Farhan talking about his initial experience at school: "... at the beginning, when I came to this country, I think I started at the second half of year 6. I didn't speak English at the time so it was hard for me to keep up with the work that my counterparts were doing. The beginning of secondary school, from year 7, I was doing primary level work due to my [poor] English. It was really hard at the beginning but I had to work hard in terms of learning the language and learning how to communicate...it was hard at the beginning and I didn't go to primary school in Somalia so when I came here I was too late for primary school and

went to secondary school. It took 2 or 3 years to get adjusted and to keep up with the other students. I also did get help from my father at the beginning”.

Indeed, Farhan had the support of an educationally-oriented father who was able to monitor his children’s school progress. This was not the case with some other young Somali people who were the same age as Farhan, and started school at the same time as him: “I know a lot of friends, who were the same age as me and started school at the same time in year 7. They possibly didn’t have as much support at home and they couldn’t catch up as quickly as me. ... So by the time the GCSE’s came they weren’t able to do it. A lot of them were put in the lower groups which were de-motivating and the teachers didn’t expect them to get [good] grades. ... [Many of them] didn’t go to university [because] they weren’t able to catch up at school”.

Farhan partly attributes his success at school and university to his family background. He comes from a tight-knit, religious family with deep respect for traditional values, and a strong commitment to education. His father, in particular, was able to do a better job at insulating his children from bad influences. Here is Farhan again talking about the effects on children, and boys in particular, growing up in dysfunctional families as opposed to his intact family: “Because of the dysfunction within Somali families, a lot of families break up and this leads to a lot of single mothers. The mother is capable of making sure the daughter is behaving but the boys become disruptive because she can’t discipline them. That is when fathers are needed. Due to the lack of discipline, they start truanting and start to get involved in gangs. I think family units braking up in the Somali community has affected young boys severely. It’s sad. ... If fathers are there to discipline young boys then they are more likely to behave. And the fact that a lot of father’s haven’t done what they are supposed to be doing in addition to the circumstances may have led to a lot of youngsters growing up angered.”

Farhan cherishes the memory of his university experience. Besides his academic work, he developed broad interest and experience in student

politics, and got involved in a huge number of societies. It was also here that his talents for politics and leadership began to emerge. Farhan stood for election as the president of his university's Student Union and lost by 57 votes. He came second, with 1600 votes. Here is Farhan talking about his time as a biology student at university and his exposure to student politics and to domestic as well as international issues of the day: "I lived in the university, and there were a lot of people I became friends with, and I enjoyed controlling my finances and looking after myself and so on. The locality was good ... I was focusing in biology; I liked the scientific concepts. But at the same time I wanted some change, so I became part of the discussion society ... I then got involved with the student's union organization. With friends we started other organizations to help students with job opportunities and so on. My first year was really quiet because I was getting to know the area, but my second year was much more interesting and the final year was the most interesting. After my second year I took a gap year, I went to work for a company which did fund raising for NGO's, which was interesting, and that allowed me to develop a lot of communication, personal and people skills by the time I returned to university. I was doing fundraising on behalf of various charities and I'd do telephone fundraising which required a lot of communication and that helped me develop personally. I used a lot of the skills I gained and put the ideas I learnt at university into practice. Finally, I got involved in the student's union more and I put myself forward to run for the president of the student's union which was a tremendous experience, and I did learn a bit of politics on the way. If I'd won I would have got a full time role for it, and there were 4 candidates running who were part of the student union for the past 3 years ... and I was the new guy on the block. It was a tremendous experience. I came second which was unexpected, I got a large number of votes...I was a voice for a lot of people, and it was so unexpected I actually got a congratulation from the student union manager and that year the number of students voting in that election was the most ever. I lost by about 57 points and I think I got about 1600 and something votes, it was huge."

It was at university that he developed a commitment to community activism, Farhan says, and that is why he got involved in his father's community organization. He also developed the values of hard work in order to change things rather than expect things to change on their own. Farhan says he would encourage young Somali people who are able to do so to go to university and to get involved with student union. "There is more to university than lectures," as he puts it. He would also like to go back to university himself in order to undertake a master's degree course.

But Farhan has also come to realize that opportunities will not come knocking on your door simply because you have a degree, especially in the current climate. Almost a year and a half since his graduation, he didn't find a job. There are vast numbers of people with top qualifications who are looking for jobs out there, he says, and it is like a giant competition to find work. While university education may not be the passport to success it once was, in Farhan's view, it remains to be a strong investment: "Ten to fifteen years ago, having a degree would help you secure a job, but now it's becoming more competitive and the skills and experience you have are essential. Education isn't just a way to help you secure a job, it is meant to open your mind, to realise a number of things. In terms of education leading to a career, you need to have the relevant skills and experience to help you secure a job. At the moment, the number of jobs available in the market is less compared to before. And I know a lot of people who have a law, accounting or engineering degrees who are using the skills they have to create jobs for themselves because companies aren't employing as much as before. I think it's a good thing, and it's probably going to happen more in the future. It's not as simple as people may think, getting a degree won't mean you'll definitely have a job soon after graduating. It may have been in previous decades as only certain classes had the capacity to go to university. Therefore they got the jobs. As times have changed, this country has caught up with other developed countries that have many people turning out from universities, and they have to compete on that level. I think there's a place for education in everything."

Because of the difficulties in securing a job, Farhan says he had a rethink and decided to train as a legal adviser with a Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB). This opportunity sounded exciting and chimed perfectly with his new found community activism, he says. But he also has long-term entrepreneurial ambitions. This is how he puts it: "First I want to qualify as an advisor for CAB, and work there for three years. With that experience I can then apply to become a legal officer in the next five to seven years. I've got entrepreneurial skills, and I see a huge value in business. Once I'm financially stable I'd like to get into property investment not only in this country, but possibly back in Somalia and other places. In the next 10 years I'd like to become a businessman but before then there are other things I need to do."

7.1

Alas's story

I interviewed Alas at the backroom of his mum's shop in a main thoroughfare in North London on the 4th of January 2009. But there were problems along the way. For some reason unbeknown to me, Alas and his younger brother were deeply suspicious of the project. His brother refused to take part in it. I also found it almost impossibly hard to interview Alas as he would simply not turn up for appointments, and perhaps because he did not want to be interviewed. It took a great deal of time and effort to interview him. Yet nor was the account obtained very illuminating.

Alas arrived in the UK from Somalia at the age of 7 in November 1990, with his mother and younger brother. His father never came to the UK, so the children were raised by their mother. Alas is now 25, and tells me that he recently found a job as 'Driver of a CCTV-equipped smart car' for a Council in North London. He also works in his mum's shop.

Alas describes his positive school experiences as follows: "Meeting people of different backgrounds, learning about their culture and how they live. You'll also get the opportunity to an education which I may not have received back home." What was negative about school was the next question and Alas responds thus: "There used to be groups in school. The Somalis would stick together. The Turkish would do the same as well as the Jamaicans. This could lead to conflicts between groups at times...I used to mix with everybody."

Alas finished school in 2000, and went to a Sixth Form College for a year. He then went on to another college to study business where he gained 'an AVCE (or Advanced) Business qualifications'. After that, he helped out at his family's shop and, at the same time, applied to go to university. He says he studied 'a business course' at university for one year, but then decided to take some time out to work. He worked at 'a reception in King's Cross'.

I asked Alas if he received any qualifications from the university which he attended, and this is what he said: "No, I didn't. I never completed the course because I started working". And does he intend to go back to university to complete the course? Alas's reply: "Maybe one day! When you start working, it becomes difficult for one to return to education. There are other factors that arise which may prevent you from returning."

Identity is very important to Alas as it reminds him of 'where he came from and where he is going to'. He views his life in the UK as 'temporary,' saying that he has "plans to go back home, to go back to my family". And where is this family and home? He answers: "I'd like to be back in Somalia, living there in peace with my people, trying to benefit Somalia." About 50% of his friends are follow Somalis, the rest belong to 'various other races and religions'. I asked Alas if he is a member of any Somali clubs or community networks, and this is what he says: "There are community centres but I tend to stay away from them ... There really aren't any major community

[organizations] targeted at helping Somalis and those that exist aren't well known".

This is how Alas sees the main problems facing young Somali people like himself in finding a place in society: "I think they're not getting much out of the schools, the community centres, and their family life. It's easy to stray away during those tough times. They need strong family support systems that are there for them, that's what I had". Education does help one get a better job, in his view, 'but the connections you have are vital in helping you secure a job as well".

Alas would define success for himself as "being educated ... trying to be somebody". He thinks the chances of success are not the same for everybody in the UK and that Somali young people are, in particular, educationally disadvantaged: "No, it's not equal. They have an advantage education-wise. Somalis can also face racial discrimination, although I haven't experienced it myself. It is there as you never know what people are thinking".

Finally, I asked Alas if he would like to say something about "the anti-terror police raid" on their house which his mum talked about, but he declined to comment.

8.1

Zaki's story

Zaki kindly agreed to come to my own place for his interview which took place at the beginning of January 2009. At the time, aged 23, Zaki was a NEET. He said he put off going to university this year so that he could get a job, and get married: "I found things getting harder, and want to get a job and start a family." This arrangement had the blessing of both his family and that of his bride-to-be.

The pair wed 'at the beginning of the summer and moved in with the bride's family', according to Zaki's father [Personal Communication with Hussein Guure Waasuge, 15.10.09]. The father tells me that Zaki is still looking for a job, and that his wife goes to college. They shall continue living with the wife's family until Zaki can get a job and the couple are able to rent their own place. It has also been reported that Zaki's wife is already pregnant with their first child. This latter information comes not from the father, but from one of Zaki's friends.

First, a little biographical data is in order. Zaki arrived in the UK from Somalia at the age of 10 in 1995, with his mum and younger siblings. He is the eldest of his parents' 10 children. Kassim (see 8.2), whose story is next, is the younger brother of Zaki, and Fardosa (8.3) is a younger sister. Their father came to the UK as an asylum seeker in 1993 and, upon receipt of his ILR [Indefinite Leave to Remain], sent out for his family to join him in London. The family settled in North London where the children grew up and went to school.

Zaki's formative years at school were fun, varied and gave him a good experience. He enjoyed school and met a lot of different people, he says, but English language difficulties presented particular challenges for his adjustment at school: "School was fun. It was a good experience. I met a lot of different people. ... [But] I remember it was a bit hard to learn the language. People would laugh at you because you can't pronounce couple of words properly."

For Zaki, like his brother Kassim, life after school has also been challenging. Of course, Kassim is quite a different kettle of fish (see next story). But Zaki too was taken out of school and sent to Somalia by his parents, and hence wasn't able to take his GCSE tests: "I didn't do my GCSEs. I was supposed to finish school in 2003, but I didn't stay in school because I was sent back to Somalia."

I asked Zaki why was he sent back to Somalia? And he replies thus: "I guess I wasn't speaking the language (Somali) so my parents decided to send me back. More importantly, I think, I was sent back because they wanted to put their (Somali) culture back into me." I also asked Zaki what he did whilst he was in Somalia, and this is what he says: "Actually, the main reason why we were sent there was I was going to the mosque for 6 days a week to receive the religious education ... I was [also] sent into a Somali school which was difficult because I had to keep correcting them in their English ... Yes, instead of them correcting me, I had to do that."

Does Zaki think that his experience of going back to Somalia has helped him in some way; and if so, how? This was his reply: "I consider myself actually much more experienced and more wiser than I was before I went to Somalia. I've got a new perspective in life now which I didn't have before."

Zaki has harsh words for Somali parents and organizers of Somali community groups but also, in particular, for their common culture of clan division: "I think most (Somali) kids who are on the street are there because they have no parents. Some of them live with people who may be their guardians, but are not their real parents. And (some of) the parents who are looking after the kids don't care about them. Do they? That is why most of these kids are on the streets anyway. I think these so-called communities should actually start paying attention to the kids. Most of the kids are on the street. It is the community, in my view, that can bring them back to where they should be. ... Instead of them actually competing against each other, they should be competing for the kids. There are too many communities out there, and I think that is just wrong. There should be one. In north London, I swear to God, nobody can count them: you've got 40 communities. ... This is where the funny part comes into play because everyone thinks that this is got to do with tribe. To be honest, I can't defend (the position) and I also think that it is to do with tribe as well. And that is where the problem comes because in the country that we live in this day

and age, you can't rely on tribalism, you've got to think about the whole community not a particular tribe. ... When I think about these things, I actually think in terms of becoming a mentor to help younger kids not fall into that trap of tribalism, and that they think in terms of the bigger community interest."

Zaki stayed in Somalia for 1½ years. Upon his return, he went to college to 'study electronics'. He gives the details of the course and the College as follows: "It was a two year course. There was a little complication on the way. The first college I was attending had financial problems keeping up with the course so they had to change it into a different course. They then asked me to change to ... College where I had to do the course and gain my diploma. I then went to uni from there."

He wanted to have four years at university after leaving the college. But things did not go, according to plan. Here is Zaki again: "I actually transferred twice. I first started at the University of ... where I began a course in computer science. Then in my second year, they changed the course to Computer Networks. They said they don't do networks here. I then changed [transferred] to ... University to continue my studies there. ... It was a four year course [and] so far I did one year at ... and the other year at ... This year is like a gap year for me because I am not going to university. ... I am taking a break from the course ... to start a family."

Starting a family is relatively easy and, as we can see, Zaki has already started his family. The difficult bit is getting a job. Leaving school with no education means young people are less likely to get a job, and more likely to rely on the state to support them. That is the position Zaki finds himself now. At 23 and married with a wife, he is not currently working. He deferred his university course until when? He himself may not have the answer. In fact, all that Zaki is prepared to say about this is that he has been going out with this girl for a long time, and they have decided to get married. His dad gave only lukewarm support after being told about the decision. Here is

Hussein, clearly frustrated by the circumstances: “Zaki went to university and he should be in his second year this year. But without even discussing it with me he stopped because he was with someone (a girl) and they decided to marry this year. They decided that he should work instead of going to uni because they wanted to get married. He is saying that he will go back to university next year. As I said, he should have been in 2nd year at uni this time but he is not because he didn’t register. He will hopefully register next year to restart his course.” Many months later, I contacted the father for an update and he confirmed that Zaki has not registered to restart his course at university this year [Personal Communication with Hussein ... 15.10.09].

I asked Zaki if he ever worked, and this is what he tells me: “Yes, for instance last summer, I did a football coaching course in which I obtained a level one certificate. I then took a coaching job to coach under age little kids, and kids who don’t socialize. It [was] like 3½ weeks. ... [I have] also done couple of odd jobs. I’d say menial jobs: things like painting and decorating, etc.”

Perhaps owing to his exposure of the negative experiences his younger brother has had (see Kassim’s story), Zakis’ impression of young people’s friendship networks in the neighbourhood was far less benign. In his own words: “If you can avoid everything around you that is negative, say like most of those [who] grow up in a bad neighbourhood, if you avoid all those bad influences – I will consider that as a success.”

What other things would he think might lead a young person like him to succeed in society, i.e., get a job? In his reply, Zaki has his heart in the right place: “Skills, qualifications and experience are all very important. In fact, if you go for a job interview, the first question you’ll be asked is this: what are you going to put on the table in terms of experience, skills and qualifications that other people can’t put forward.”

And what does he has to do now to gain the 'skills, qualifications and experiences' he just talked about? Here is Zaki again: "No, not praying to God. Laughter ... I think it depends on the individual. If the individual is self-motivated and they put in the time and effort, surely they can be successful ... Basically hit those bullet points."

8.2

Kassim's story

Kassim arrived in the UK at the age of 8 with his mum and siblings (see 8.1 above). By the time he was 12 or 13, he had already got tangled up in a world of gangs, according to his father and also in crime and Class A drugs by his own admission. He dropped out of school, and was running around with a crowd of delinquent kids. The parents then decided to send him back to Somalia, a decision the father now regrets. Here is Hussein, Kassim's father, talking up what happened to Kassim and how the parents tried to resolve it: "I had a problem with Kassim, my second eldest son. He dropped out of school, and we then took him to Somalia. We have seen early signs before he reached Year 9, Year 10? He was getting involved with gangs, and that kind of thing. What I did at that point was to take him away to Somalia ... [to try and save him from] crime, drugs and all the other social problems ... It is a big problem raising children in the UK."

I interviewed Kassim through a long-distance telephone call to a town in Southern Somalia where he is currently living and is said to be working as a farmer. Although his dad talked to me at length about Kassim's experience in the UK and his return back in Somalia, I still wanted to talk to him to hear his side of the story. The dad then very kindly agreed to arrange a long-distance telephone conversation between myself and Kassim. That telephone interview took place on the 17th of February 2009 in the presence of the father. I spoke to Kassim both in English and in Somali, and the

conversation lasted for more than an hour. I thought the best way I could possibly do justice to Kassim's interview was to present the full and unabridged transcript of his conversation rather than excerpting from it. I follow that dictum, but also cut much of the repetition to save pages. Hence the following passages should just give us the gist of what he said.

Q: I'd like to know a little about your experience in London?

A: I tell you my experience. My first problems had come from friends. I didn't make good friends for myself. I made bad friends and bad friends led me to bad business. Things changed again when I went to college. There were groups of gangs that I came into contact with. I think you must have heard the names of the groups fighting it out there between Camden and North London groups. In the beginning I had no business with these groups. But when I returned from Somalia, I met again some of my old friends. After college, we used to sit in the park. Some of the kids would smoke weed. Others would consume alcohol and stuff. ... Out there (in the UK), it is very difficult to get a job if you're a criminal. And there was no community helping these kids get out of their situation. ...

Q: Was there anything else that happened to you?

A: My own experience was skipping school ... going around another area just to cause problems; and then I started becoming friends with the drug dealers in the neighbourhood. And then there is something called supplying which means you have to work for them. If you need money, there is too many people that are allowing you to become a drug dealer, big boys. They're big men, not our age, but they're drug dealers. They used to tell us 'Sell it. Get half, and get half'. That means half profit is mine and half is yours. So that was the business of drugs. I had experience that wasn't nice. There is some people that die, some people that live. I had that experience and my dad knows it 'cause I told him about it. And the third problem is the police. Once the police knows you're fitted (sic), every time they will come to you. Whenever they see you, they will come to you and ask you questions. Yes, who's selling this? Who's selling that? Who's selling this? If you go and

tell us, we'll arrest you'. Those are the racist ones. There is another police (who) if you do something wrong one time, they catch you and say 'Yes, you just done a criminal damage'. Me, *alhamdulillah* (thank God), I am no longer there in that place. I left that place. When I was leaving, it was not really good. There was killing and stabbing going on at the time. The problems arise from the area. If you live in ... [name of area in North London], they (youths from other areas) will ask you about where you live. Kids are fighting in the name of an area. It is to do with areas. They fight for post code. All the gangs are post code based.

Q: What other things did you see happen?

A: I knew a boy that the police themselves would supply the drugs.

Q: The police supply drugs to a boy?

A: Yes, they supply him drugs. If you go to any of the parks where these Somali boys congregate, you see the police come and ignore some boys. Sometimes they'd pretend they're doing a search on those children but the children are used to sell drugs. Their parents are not aware of that, but it is happening. You can yourself go and sit in the park at ... [an area in North London]. You see the police come and take one boy to a side. They talk to him and he comes back laughing. They tell him where to go get the drugs to sell. The police reassures him that his colleagues would have seen him talk to the boy so they won't touch him when they see him later. So he should not be afraid and go on about his business. Threats and intimidation are also part of the game which the police use.¹

Q: Okay, you gave me a general overview of the problem. But how did you start on this path?

A: Yes it was bad friends' influence. Another problem was the TV and music. It is black pop culture, TV and music, that shapes the behaviour of the young people. It is called bad influx music? You can get it in youtube. And also gang signs [hand signs gang members use to identify their affiliation].

¹ Perhaps I ought to put in a disclaimer here to say that the views and opinions presented about the police in this answer and the one just above it are solely those of the interviewee and do not necessarily represent my own views. I have simply reported what Kassim said on the matter, and in his own words.

Q: How big do you think is this problem among the Somali young people?

A: I'd say 50% are involved in these things. In young Somali people, the bad guys outnumber the good guys. Another problem is alcohol. It is a big problem for many young Somali people who use it. They mix alcohol, weed, and *Khat*.

Q: What do these young people live on? How do they support themselves?

A: Some of them actually have day jobs, and in the night they sell drugs. And they are also users (of drugs). They are all in groups. Some groups sell weed. Other sell skunk (what is the difference?). Others sell heroin. And others sell cocaine. Those kids who roam the streets after 10 pm are out there for business. What is their problem, the boys who're out in the streets after 10 or 11 o'clock? Either they're being used to sell drugs and hence working for someone. Or they're selling drugs to work for themselves. And if you use marijuana, you will never listen. I used to not listen to my dad whatever he does to me. If he talk to me or even beat me, I'd just not listen. You'll not listen if you're a druggie, and you won't rest. You can't stay in the house; you'll keep moving until you get your fix.

Q: What happened to some of those you knew who fell into this trap?

A: I saw some of my friends end up in the street, sleeping rough. I saw others who've become mad. Some have killed themselves. Some ended up in prison. As a young man living in London, either you work or go college, or you end up in the street and become a gang member. ... Once you develop bad friendships, the only option you have is to leave the country, and that is what happened to me in London. Because there is no way you can escape from your bad friends, they will always find you wherever you may be in the UK. Once they (these friends) figure out where you are, they come to you and tell you lies. Then you drink and smoke together; they give you more lies 'we're going to start this or that business; and we do this and we do that'. You'll just be taken in and that is it. Once you end up in a gang, there is no way out. The only way out for you is to leave the country, or you'll be

dead. I know that is what the gang leaders say to the young Somali boys who're their members. I've made out of it, and I am no longer governed by their whims. There is even a case (police/court matter) outstanding against me which I have done. Other boys did it, but I am accused of it. I don't wanna end down. Even if I were to tell who did it, it won't help me. ... Many of the kids are in these situations, and you can see a lot them hanging in the streets or in the parks, are enslaved by their gang masters. They're being fed hash and other drugs, and they're then trained to follow orders. The child goes to the park first to play football, but once gang masters get their hands on him, feed him drugs and train him, he forgets all about football, school or college and even his family. That is the end of his life. I saw too many kids in that situation. The gang members have rank and file; they've got generals, lieutenants, sergeants, and soldiers. The soldiers are the retainers who're sent around to do mean things. You heard those children in Camden who killed the young boy. They were in a gang, and all of them ended up in prison. The children were each given 5 years imprisonment, and the older boys were gaoled for life. I left before these things happened.

Q: So what is your life like now in where you are?

A: As I came here, I got married and had a child. I then had another child. After that, I was returned to London (by the parents). I matured and was wiser when I returned to the UK. I don't know what they did to me or how they did it, but I ended up with them (old friends) again. My dad then said to me 'either choose them or choose us. There is no middle way'. I then decided to return to Somalia, live with my family and work here. There is work here; there is education if you want to learn. There is everything here. Many young Somali people what they do in London is very bad, and many of them are living in a very difficult position. I have even got a stab wound in my leg which I have never shown to my parents. I was nearly killed once when I was involved in these things.... It is true you can make money from drugs, but there is huge risk and you may end up in prison, or end up dead if you continue with it. As the money pours in, your friend becomes your enemy and can kill you easily. The man who stabbed me in the leg was my friend.

We made lots and lots of money which led to us fighting, and I got stabbed by him. He was trying to stab me on the chest, but I grabbed hold of him and wrestled him to the ground and threw the knife away. Unbeknown to me, he had another knife and stabbed me in the leg. I jumped on a wall and ran, and I decided never to put myself in that situation again.

The father was appalled by the turn of events. He simply couldn't fathom what was happening with his children and with his son Kassim, in particular. Such problems were alien to his way of life, he thought, and only affected other people: "The thing is we didn't expect our children to have the problems they faced here. ... We used to say "Oh, the black people are not doing that good. ... Oh, Jamaicans are ..." We didn't know that we are in a similar transition, and we could end up even worse. ... As a parent I spend a lot time raising my kids as best as I can. Kassim's case questions my ability as a parent, and the question comes to my mind: what did I do wrong? I ask myself: why Kassim? Why did this happen to my son? This is because I want the best for my kids. I want them to get education; I want them to have jobs; and I want them to have their own families, and get established in this country. In our Somali culture, you give the best to your children and they, in return, when you retire will look after you. That is what we did for our parents and expected our kids to do for us. So those questions nagged at my mind. Why did it go wrong for my son?"

The father looks back with regret on the pain his decision, to send his son back to Somalia, caused: "I think the biggest mistake of all which I made was to send my son back to Somalia, in the first place. He then found freedom where there was no one telling him off. He did whatever he wanted to do and more and learnt a lot from bad people in there at a time when he was young and very vulnerable. People out there saw him (as a prey). Here was a young man who couldn't speak that much Somali and was mainly speaking English. They took advantage of him, and that was a very big mistake on my part. If anything can come out of this, I should say that

Somali families should not send their children (to Somalia) without proper thinking and proper preparation.”

The father reports that Kassim’s return to Somalia during the last time was a choice made by Kassim himself as opposed to the earlier travels which were initiated and encouraged by the parents. The father also says Kassim, aged 21, has changed and because of that the family has generously supported him. Kassim now has a wife and 2 children in Somalia. He is also said to be operating a 5 hectare family farm with 200 fruit bearing mango trees, 500 lemon trees, coconut trees, and onion plants. Here is Kassim boasting about his earnings in Somalia: “If I say there is more money in here (Somalia) than in London, will you believe me? You can ask my dad since I returned from London which is about 14 months ago, the amount of money I earned is more than what I’ve ever earned in London.”

On the 25th of June 2009, I spoke to Hussein (Kassim’s father) on the phone to establish the actual metric size of the farm. In that conversation, he told me that he bought a farm tractor and machinery from London and shipped them to Kassim in Somalia about two weeks ago at a cost of £10,000. This equipment is meant to be used in the farm by Kassim and his co-workers.

In a more recent telephone conversation [dated 15.10.09], the father tells me that Kassim has now fully trained for all facets of ‘tractor work’. He operates ‘all farm machinery and equipment’ safely and uses them both on his own farm, and commercially on other people’s farms.

Kassim’s wife has just had a baby boy so they now have three children, 2 boys and a girl. As he reports these apparent successes of Kassim in Somalia, the father sounds a note of caution: “I am still not sure as to how much trust I can put on these stories of success by Kassim in Somalia, especially when I look back into all the things that had happened in the UK in his early life.”

9.2

Jamal's story

Jamal arrived in the UK at the age of 11 in 1992. He came with his stepmother and 2 older sisters to join their father who was already living in London. The family settled in North London where the children grew up and went to school. The story of Jamal unfavourably compares to that of his sister. Whereas she has a particularly tenacious grip on the course of her life and career, Jamal seems to have lost his compass in his after-school life experience (see Suuban 9.1, Appendix A).

At 28, he is one of the oldest of all the young people interviewed. Upon interview [8th Jan. 2009], Jamal was single, living near his parents' house, and was without a job. He previously worked as a 'self-employed driver, delivering new cars'. He also worked as an 'ambulance driver for a private agency'. He is not saying how long he's had these jobs and why he is no longer doing them, but his dad tells me that these were all irregular jobs of short duration. Jamal also trained for 8 months with a 'recycling company which specialized in repairing washing machines'.

Unlike most other young people, Jamal converses in Somali during the interview saying he is more comfortable to speak Somali than English. I asked Jamal if we can give it a try to talk in English for the benefit of the tape so that it will be a lot easier to transcribe the conversation later. However, he kept on reverting back to Somali. I am not sure as to why he did that, but I can say that he didn't sound terribly confident in his English. A statement made by his father in an interview confirms my doubts: "The English Jamal speaks is the one he picked up from the kids in the streets, and he has very little English literacy" [Interview by Abdi Iidow Sharraawe, 21st Nov. 2008]. Jamal claims that 90% of his friends are Somali because 'it's easier to communicate with them ... [and] to relate to them'.

Asked about what positive experience, if any, he gained from school, this is what Jamal says: "The education I received...I learnt the English language whilst at school." And what was negative about his experience at school? He replies thus: "The lack of discipline shown by some pupils, who were disruptive in class and would fight with others ..." Jamal adds that if someone is determined to excel in school they can, if they work hard. But that was not his experience, according to his father, 'because he did very poorly at school'.

In interview, Jamal gave so little account of himself as to nearly render the conversation useless. Yet in his little narration, he professes to care about education, skills, and gaining experience that would lead him to employment: "Education is very important. ... [I want to be] someone with a secure job who is educated, has gained relevant qualification and skills, and possibly has his own family." Elsewhere he says he wants 'a career related to maintenance or engineering'. Asked as to how he would achieve this, he replies thus: "I'd need to work hard to acquire the relevant training and skills."

But leaving aside his assertions, Jamal has actually been unemployed for most of his adult life, save for brief periods of irregular work. I asked him where has things gone wrong? To which he replied: "I think I've underachieved academically." This is what Jamal says happened after he left school: "I finished high school in 1997 then I went to various colleges ... I attended 3 different colleges since completing my GCSE's. I took a GNVQ intermediate course in I.C.T; I left after the second year of that course...After leaving college I took an 8 month training course with a recycling company. The training was based in North London, but because the company relocated to Liverpool I was never able to complete the course."

To his father, Jamal is trapped in a perilous zone of idleness and inactivity. He lacks the minimum level of skills required for securing a job. Yet he has

no sense of long-term commitment, so there is nothing he's doing at the present to help himself move away from this position: "After leaving school, Jamal has not done anything at all with his life. He hasn't gone to college in any proper sense. He has no qualifications, no skills, and no employment experience. He has not worked, and doesn't like education. Therefore, his future is very bleak indeed. He hasn't married or formed a family either. He is really down and out, and hasn't figured out where he wants to be or what he wants to do with his life." The bit about Jamal not being married has changed (see below).

The father tells me that Jamal refuses to accept the low-paid jobs that Somali adult immigrants and others are doing for a living. Yet he doesn't have the skills and qualifications necessary to secure a better job: "The young man, for some weird reason, believes that because he grew up in London, he does not want to do the kind of dirty jobs that older Somali men who came here as immigrants like myself are doing. He will not work as a security guard, or mini-cab driver, and will not look for shop floor or factory work, etc. He thinks these are menial jobs and he must not do them. But he doesn't have the skills and educational qualifications necessary for a better job. So instead of getting a job and earning his bread he's just idling, often sleeping in the daytime and out and about in the night until the sun comes up."

Jamal has wed his fiancée, a fellow Somali, at the beginning of August this year (2009). I understand, from speaking to his father recently [Face-to-face meeting with Abdi I. Sharraawe, 1st Nov. 2009], that Jamal's wife was pregnant with their first child. When asked during interview the question 'What do you think is more important for a young person like you – getting married and having a family or finding a good job?', Jamal had this to say: "Getting a job is more important, that's my first priority. Once my finances are in order, then I'd get married." Clearly at the time, Jamal was merely seeking to impress.

The father hopes that Jamal might actually change his behaviour after marrying, and that the marriage itself might have positive effects on his son's well-being. In our earlier interview [Telephone conversation with Abdi I. Sharraawe, 21st November 2008], the father remarked that there were only two options open to him to deal with his son: "I believe I have only two options left to change him for the better. The first one is that he gets married, have children, and then hopefully with that responsibility, he will change his situation from being idle to becoming an active man who provides for his family. The other option is that I set up my own private business and offer him a job in that venture. Only time will tell what happens next."

In my latest meeting with him (01.11.09, see above), I asked the father for an update on his position vis-à-vis Jamal. I reminded him that of the two options he set forth during our telephone conversation last time round, option one (Jamal going to get married) has come to pass. So what was happening with option two?

With a resigned expression on his face, the father said he was a 'penniless refugee again'. He lost his little savings in Somalia, and things were pretty grim for a time. The car he is now using for minicabbing was recently bought with borrowed money (see the story of Abdi I. Sharraawe, Chap. IV). Although the father still viewed Jamal's position as 'untenable and absurd', he was simply unable to fund any form of business for his son at the present time.

10.3

Adil's story

Adil's story and that of his brother Guure (10.5, next) are linked up with those of their 3 sisters (10.1, 10.2, & 10.4). When I interviewed him on the

31st of January 2009, Adil was a jobless degree-holder. He graduated from university in July 2007 with a 1st gaining a BA Degree in business management. He then sent off his CV to multitudes of companies and waited for job offers to come in, but to no avail. In the meantime, he took up pursuits such as travelling and running his own website. He doesn't say what this website was about, and what (if any) significance it has for his jobsearch.

Almost two years on and still with no job, Adil decided this last summer to embark on a postgraduate course rather than stay at home and do nothing. In September 2009, he began an MSc course in 'Airport Planning and Management'. Tuition fees for UK/EU students for this course was £3950 in 2009/10 (see Cranfield University's website <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/soe/postgraduatestudy/airportplanning/index.jsp>). The family raised all the funding for Adil to undertake the course [Personal Communication with Adil's mother, 6th Nov. 2009, & with Adil, 8th Nov. 2009].

Adil's experience may not be dissimilar to that of other 'young people from ethnic minorities finding it harder to enter the jobs market on leaving school or college and extending their education' (Abrams 2009). Still, it must have caused him great distress that he couldn't find work for such a long period of time after leaving university. In my interview, Adil seems to suggest that he remained unemployed for a while because he was very particular about the kind of job he wanted, and wasn't prepared to take anything that comes his way: "I just didn't wanna settle for any job. I was very picky about the kind of job that I was going to do, and that is what contributed to not having a job for a while."

Adil's mum takes a different approach to the problem. In her view, it was difficult for her son to find a job because the family, being refugees from Somalia, does not have the networks and personal contacts necessary to help their children get into employment. But also her words reveal

suspicions of 'racism and discrimination' lurking in her mind: "When young people finish university, it is quite difficult to get a job. With racism and discrimination often being in the background, the prevailing problems of economic downturn and jobs shrinking in the market is also impacting on young people. When compared to graduates from other (non-Somali) groups, I'd say young Somali graduates find it very hard to secure a job. The *Timajilic* (literally, soft-haired – a name many Somalis use for Asians) can secure ... a placement or a job while still at university in a variety of places such as a GP, in a bank, or in a similar private practice because their people are everywhere. For example, there was a *Timajilac* boy in our area who went to university with my son Adil. Whereas Adil obtained a First Class Honours Degree, the Indian boy graduated with a 2:1 or was it a 2:2, I can't really remember. They were always friends up to their high school. I used to give them a lift when they want to play with friends, and I'd bring them home when they finish. The boy's dad would also take them out to play together. They both graduated on the same day, 13th of July 2007, from university. By end of July or August 2007, the Asian boy was in full employment. Adil is nearing the end of his 2nd year after graduation and hasn't still secured a job [Interview with Jimo, 6th March 2009]."

Adil, however, begs to differ. He says the current economic downturn was to blame for his joblessness. He also disagrees with the notion that discrimination or racism caused his graduate unemployment: "From an economic perspective, perhaps it's a bit harder to secure a job in the current financial climate than maybe it was 5 or 10 years ago. From a social point of view, I don't feel like I've experienced any form of racial discrimination or any other form of discrimination such as having an Islamic name. I don't feel as though those things affect me, as far as I know, I don't get that type of impression from people who interview me or people I've been in contact with ... I just think there was a lack of jobs".

Adil was 10 when he arrived with his mum and siblings in 1993 to join their father who was already living in the UK. Mother and children lived in

Germany for a few years prior to their arrival in London [see Mohamed Abdulle Ga'al, Chap. IV]. The family settled in West London where Adil has pleasant memories about school: "The quality of teaching was very good. I was able to settle in very quickly because everyone was very friendly. Most of my school experiences were very positive. I was lucky enough to grow up in an area where poverty wasn't an issue. I never really experienced any negativity. Besides, it was also a multicultural environment so I never felt like an outsider. In that sense, I felt like I was very lucky."

Adil finished school in 2001. Because he was aiming for university entry, he went to college for a two-year A Level course. At college he studied 3 good subjects which he enjoyed, namely English, Biology, and Psychology. He successfully gained his A Level grades and went to the University of Westminster to do a business management degree.

The importance of education and hard work has become recurrent themes in Adil's interview. He particularly sees university education as being prerequisite for access to a good job: "In this society, everything is dependant on you being able to read, write and understand ... [thus] education matters in every aspect of life ... [For me] success is graduating from university, and getting a job, preferably one that is related to your subject ... If you work hard, you can achieve anything and things will work out for you in the end."

In my earlier interview with him, Adil had a strong view to securing further qualifications. Career success was also his hope: "I plan to do my master's this September abroad. There is a course I'd like to do which consists of 3 universities [sic] located in different areas of Europe (Italy, Spain and Sweden) and you'll study on each campus for 6 months. The course is a year and a half, and it is an internationally recognised Master's degree in investment management. Alternatively, I'd like to do my Masters in America or Canada in Industrial management ... In 10 years time I see myself managing a steel company or a construction company." He said a mouthful

there, but he is also full of ambition and energy. Although his present course is not about 'industrial management', he has got his wish for a master's degree.

Adil has certainly been encouraged by the unwavering support of his family. They are footing the bill for his university course. With his new qualifications, he says he wants to seek employment with 'airport authorities and those suppliers that offer services to them'.

10.5

Guure's story

Guure, born in Germany but brought up in London, is undertaking an undergraduate degree in pharmacology at university. He started off as a radiography student last year at the age of 19, but then changed into pharmacology this year because he wanted to 'train for a professional career that makes use of his science skills'. A degree in pharmacology, according to Guure, provides you with 'skills that will always be in demand'.

In fact both Guure and his mum confirm that the lack of employment experienced by Adil and Deeqa (see 10.1 & 10.3) a long while after they left university influenced the decision taken by Guure, and a younger sister who started university this year, to do science-related courses. The younger sister, Farhiya aged 18, began a Biomedical Science BSc (Hons) course at a top London university in September 2009.

The mother elaborated on the main idea behind the choices made by these two young people: "We now know, for instance, that in this country (UK) young people who train in health-care and allied disciplines will have a job guaranteed at the end of their training. Five of my children have completed university education. ... Deeqa (f, 28) with a 1st in English language and

literature found it difficult to get a job. She was looking for a job for almost 2 years and if she had a job it would only be a temp as a bank clerk or she would do an agency work. Habboon (f, 27) trained as a lawyer and had a better luck than the others [that] she got a job with a Solicitor's firm straight away ... Next was Adil who did a degree in business management, but found it very difficult to get a job. ... If our young people can do health-related courses, they will get jobs. For example, my daughter Zahra (f, 24) trained as a nurse and was offered a job by 5 different hospitals. ... Young people who train as teachers would also get jobs straight away. The girls who went to university with my daughter Deeqa have all got jobs immediately as they came out of university and have had their student loans cleared for them. There are other fields where young people can train for jobs. For example, Zahra's husband has trained as an Electronic Engineer. Upon completion of his university course, he applied for six different jobs [and] was so successful that everyone of the six companies offered him a job. ... There is now my nephew who is the same age as my son Guure. He is doing an aeronautic engineering course. Hopefully he will have a job at the end of it. ... So there are fields/disciplines where the young person could be guaranteed a job. ... But we have to be clever to look for ways that our young can get ahead."

Guure's own statement seems to affirm his mum's opinion. Asked why he chose to do pharmacology, this is what he said: "I was always interested in pharmacy and what pharmacists do. Business does not interest me, but science always arouses my curiosity. Also I didn't have the qualifications to do subjects like medicine, etc, so like this was the one next to the best. The other reason was I am aware that it is difficult to get a job with certain degrees, such as business and economics etc. for example, my brother had a business management qualification and found it difficult to secure a job. ... Science-related qualifications are better, in my view, than those from arts and humanities."

To his credit, Guure found part-time work at Pizza Hut at the age of 17, and later at the High Street clothing store Next. He recently returned to his old job at the Pizza shop, but says that he doesn't want a permanent full-time job because of his university course. Here is Guure talking about his experience with the world of work: "I started work for Pizza Hut when I was 17. This was a part-time job, and I was there for about 2 years. I then left during my exam period. After that I started working at Next. I was there for a while – about a year and a half, and then recently I came back to Pizza Hut. It is about 3 months now that I am working there."

Clearly Guure has done better than many other young people in his work experience. However routine and low-paid these types of jobs may be, it is very difficult for young people nowadays to get jobs at all. I asked Guure his views as to why young Somali people, in particular, are finding it hard to get jobs. This was how he responded: "I'd say the biggest thing is the attitude. Most Somali young people these days, and males in particular, they probably have more of an attitude problem than normal people. It is the whole culture that many of these young people are presenting [to the outside world] that is the problem. And if you come to an interview trying to apply for a job, your body language and general attitude needs to have an effect on your interviewers. It looks like these young people are not bothered about it at all. They don't look like they want to work or get the job. You obviously want the money, so why don't you show your (potential) employers that you want to work hard and that you will be good for them."

So what does he think can be done about this? "Overall, I think it is a pretty difficult situation. Back home, I think the parents could do more for their child. I think most parents care although their attitude could sometimes be harsh or lenient. But it is also up to the youngsters as to what path they wanna take because it is very easy to get sucked in to a bad lifestyle with the peer pressure that goes on these days. So it is down to individual characteristics, and if they want they can realize the right path to take."

Guure is a very ambitious young man. Asked what was more important for a young person like him – getting married and having a family or finding a good job, he spoke loud and clear in favour of having a good job first: “Personally, I would definitely go with the waiting and postponing the marriage until you’re sure that you can provide very well for your family. I want to have a place to stay and a decent job first. I mean there is nothing wrong, because our religion supports this, to getting married early. You know, it stops you from doing other things. But I think it is always best to put it off until you’re in a much better position than when you’re young because there is more of a chance of getting it right then. When you’re young, you’re not mature in the head so there are more things than can go wrong in the marriage, *and with the influence of English culture these days* (my emphasis).”

How would Guure define success for someone of his age? “I’d say success is to have a degree and to get a job. Well, actually to be honest, a degree is not a 100% necessary. But if they have a good job and they come off the benefits and they’re earning to make an honest living and are contributing to society in a positive way, I’d call that a success.” And, lastly, what would he like to be doing in 10 years time? “In 10 years time, I’d like to have had a job for a few years. Probably already married and living at my own house with a good job. And if there are any children, that will also be good.”

EXYP.1

Dr. Guuleed’s story

There were two ‘extra young people’ (EXYP) interviewed, Dr. Guuleed and Jidhaan (next story). Both were males and come from polar opposites in their past, present and likely future trajectories in their experiences. One is a hospital registrar and the other is an unemployed young man who ran away from school by age 13, only to get tangled up in a world of crime and

class A drugs. I enlisted these two extra young men to the project because the girls outnumbered and out-qualified the boys in the original sample. There were 13 girls to 10 boys who gave interviews in that sample, so I decided to interview two extra males to even them out (For more on this, see Chap 3: Methodology).

At 27, Dr. Guuleed is working as a registrar at a University Hospital in the South East. He previously worked first as a trainee and then as a Senior House Officer (SHO) in two London hospitals. He is now training to become a consultant, specializing in Gastroenterology. He is married to a fellow Somali who, at the time of our interview [28 Feb 2009], was expecting their first baby. He tells me that his wife was born and bred in South London.

Dr. Guuleed was born in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1982. His dad was 'a middle ranking officer in the army' whereas his mum 'used to own a shop'. Of the little he can remember about life in Mogadishu then, because of his very young age, his family lived in a big house situated in a good neighbourhood. He has pleasant childhood memories of his time in Mogadishu: "Life was very different. Back home in Somalia we lived in a big house. My mum, my dad, and my family were all there for me when I went to primary school. Everyone in the family was around. I'd play football with my friends because you know everything and you know everyone. I could say we had a good life in there, and when the war came that is all gone."

Guuleed was 8 years old when the war started towards the end of 1990. This is what he remembers about his family's escape and the routes followed to get to the UK: "When the war started we were living in Mogadishu, but both my parents were not with us. My mum was in another city of Somalia visiting my grandmother – her mum. My dad was in Africa somewhere, and not in Somalia. As people fled from the war, we fled with our granddad and other close relatives of ours to Kismayo (in the southern tip of Somalia) ... Because of the wars, we again fled from Kismayo to Mombasa in Kenya ... This was in 1991 after the fall of Siyad Barre's government."

At this point, an older brother who was already living in the UK had applied for two of his younger brothers, including Guuleed to join him on the basis of family reunion application through the Home Office. The application was granted and Guuleed, aged 9, and one of his brothers arrived at the UK in late 1991. It was around this time that their father 'died in a car accident in America'. Guuleed's mum stayed to look after her elderly mum in Galka'yo (north central Somalia), so she never came to the UK. Various other members of Guuleed's extended family also ended up in exile and, with the exception of their mother who remains in Somalia to this day, are mostly living outside of their native country.

Upon arrival in the UK, Guuleed and his brother encountered physical, social and cultural conditions that were very different to those back home. The extent of these life changes came as a shock to Guuleed: "We then came to this country. We don't speak the language; we don't know the people; houses are small, and in the streets are cars. You can't go outside and you have to stay indoors. At the beginning, it was a big change and it was a shock". Asked if he expected to encounter these changes, this is what he says: "I didn't even know that I was coming to London. But after arrival, we went to school and we began to get to know things."

Indeed school was the great site of 'cultural contact' between Guuleed and his brother as new arrivals and more established local children. Guuleed emphasizes that what happened in these schools largely determined his present future. It is clear that he was more deeply engaged in academic work than many of his peers, otherwise he wouldn't get a place in medical school. But also there is the 'family expectation' at home. Guuleed talks of an older brother who brought them over to the UK and who shows them the way by leading, directing, and advising. Moreover, Guuleed arrives at school with very positive attitudes towards learning, and with huge respect and appreciation towards his teachers and school authorities. Teachers in return

expect him to work hard to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for him to succeed at school.

Here is Guuleed talking about his educational experience, from earliest to last, and how he managed to becoming a doctor: “When I came to this country, I started primary school. I was in primary school for about a year and a half. Primary school is very good because everyone is very young. It is not like secondary school, and it gives you the opportunity to learn English quicker in an structured environment. I was probably the oldest or the second oldest and I remember there was less bullying in primary school. You may get words wrong, but then the teacher is in charge so no one mocks you. When I started secondary school, I went to a grant-maintained school in ... East London. What happened was that in years 7 and 8, classes are mixed and people are not grouped along ability lines. You have a mixture of people in the class, some good academically and others less good and you can pick up friends from both. These (mix ability) classes continue until year 9 when you take your SATs tests and depending on your test results in year 9, you are placed with an ability group in years 10 and 11. At home I had my older brother who went to university and who was able to give me some help. He was also strict with us and would make sure that I learned and did my home work. In my SATs I scored very good. In my years 10 and 11, I was doing well and had good passes in my GCSEs. I don't know but I'd say education requires some ability and hard work, a mixture of both. You need some ability, and you also need to do hard work. But when you are at the age of 14, you might have ability but you do not realise the importance of the hard work bit so you need to have someone to push you to make sure that you do the work that is required of you. [When young] no one likes school. In secondary school, all my teachers were very nice. I did very good in my GCSEs, and then I went to Sixth Form to do biology, chemistry and geography. I did 3 A levels, and I had many options when I went to university. Initially I wasn't sure what I wanted to study, shall I do medicine, engineering, law or what. Although my brother was older (brother who brought Guuleed in to the UK), he wasn't that much older than us. He was

quite open-minded as to what I might study. He just said to me: "It is your life, get on with it and do whatever you fancy at university". I applied to a medical school and had my application accepted. I went to UCL for my medical degree, and I was there for 6 years."

One thing that stands out in Guuleed's experience is his return to Somalia at the age of 14 in 1996 to visit his mum and close relatives. Although he's been there a number of times since, that first journey back to Somalia gave him an experience to remember. Having seen the dire state of his people, Guuleed returned to the UK absolutely determined, and with a firm purpose and belief that he must work harder to do well at school: "I went to Somalia for the first time in 1996. The last time I was there was in 2006. In between I went to Somalia in 2001 and 2004. When I first went there, the fighting was still continuing in many parts of Somalia. I saw the state of the country and the people. They were very poor; they had no hospitals, and no schools for their children. I returned angry and wanted to work hard to help my people. And may be that is why I worked hard and succeeded in the end. But that first travel to Somalia really gave me a lot to think about. I don't know how I was before, but I really worked a lot harder after returning from Somalia. I really wanted to work hard, which I did. I wanted to go to a good university and study a good subject which would help me get a good job, after returning from Somalia having seen all the difficulties my people were facing. That new perspective I've come back with from Somalia definitely helped me with my work and outlook in this country." And those years of hard work culminated in his getting a place at London's University College which is at the forefront of medical training in the UK.

Guuleed says the people he met at medical school were way different to those from his social background. So he had to learn very quickly the kind of 'soft skills' they possessed to become as polished and articulate as them: "I went to school in ... [an area in East London], and I went to Sixth Form in the same area. The people I went to school with are the people from my area; the way we speak, the way we talk about subjects, what we like and what we

dislike were very similar. So when I went to university, my first few months were very difficult because the university has people from different backgrounds and from different parts of the country and they speak differently, and what they like and dislike are different. It took me may be 3 or 4 months to adjust to it.”

In the rest of our lengthy interview of roughly 3 hours duration, Dr. Guuleed postulates several main hypotheses about the issues faced by young Somali people in the UK and how they're adjusting to circumstances. The first problem young Somali people face, in his view, is lack of identity. His argument is that many young people are at a loss to understand how their Somali identity fits into the existing British ethnic categories, hence they completely shy away from their roots: “Young Somali people today don't know who they are! Are they Somali? Are they Muslim? Are they Arab? Are they black? They don't know what they are because Somalis fit into every category. ... So the biggest problem young Somali people face today is lack of identity, and that lack of identity comes from (a) because people don't know what their culture is, and (b) a lot of them won't speak Somali. If you don't speak Somali then that means you don't know your language. And if you don't know your language, it means that you don't know your heritage, history, culture – all these things, and that makes you empty. You don't have a base or something to fall back on. But when you see other people with history, culture, then you follow them. Today young people getting into trouble; these stabbings, etc; it is because they don't know who they are.”

Guuleed argues that the Somali young people who succeed are those with strong ethnic ties, traditional religious outlook, and with deep respect for their cultural origins: “In my experience, the more they are Somali and have their Somali identity intact, the more successful they are because they have identity, they have something to hold on to. ... all the people that I know including lawyers, other doctors, accountants etc. are people who are highly rooted in their Somali culture and are very much a Somali person. They're very much connected to the community; they know what is happening back

home; they follow the politics and the troubles back home. [At the other end], the ones that I see who have failed to achieve anything are those with the least *Soomaalinimo* (least rooted in Somali culture, ways and behaviour). *And if there was any advice that I would give to the authorities in this country whose business it is to assimilate immigrants to become better citizens in the UK, I would have told them that the best course for making someone to become successful in this country is to help them become rooted in their traditional culture and national identity and that would help them get somewhere with their lives instead of trying to take them away from their own culture and identity and try to assimilate them into something they might never be* (my italics). If you live in Newham and want to assimilate to British culture, British culture in Newham is underage pregnancy, teenage sex, Cannabis, etc. This is the British culture in Newham, but that is not the Somali culture. The young (Somali) people in Newham who want to hold on to their Somali culture are more likely to be in education, to be working, and/or to be married. So, my view is, if they want to assimilate to British culture (as is practiced by other young people in Newham), they'll end up doing very little for themselves and possibly destroying their lives. On the other hand, if they keep on to their Somali culture and traditions, they'd probably end up joining the middle class."

Another problem comes from what Guuleed says are the 'inappropriate expectations of the parents'. Parents have no clue as to what is happening at school, yet they somehow expect their children to become doctors, engineers or what have you: "Somali mothers and, to a certain extent, the fathers do not actually understand what happens at school. The child goes to school, but they don't what happens there. They don't know how the system works. They don't the difference between Yr 8 and Yr 10, and they don't know why do people do GCSEs. Yet they want their child to become an engineer or a doctor, or something. They don't know the ability of the child. So when their child gets their GCSE results, they get disappointed. But they never knew what their child's level was. So they have a lot of inappropriate expectations. You don't expect miracles to happen."

A third problem that Guuleed points to is 'lack of role models who have the ability to inspire young people around them'. There are no professionals in the Somali community, he says, who occupy social roles to which young people can aspire to and compare themselves with: "If you have never ever met a doctor; if you don't know anyone who is in medical school, you have no aspiration to becoming a doctor because you simply don't know how or where to go to train as a doctor. If you've never met a pilot, you can't want to become a pilot because you don't know what a pilot is or how to become one. If you get arrested all the time and you can't express yourself, it is unlikely you can ever become a policeman. So lack of role model is the problems here."

Fourth, according to Guuleed, there is no real leadership in the Somali community to inspire people to get their act together for the benefit of the younger generation: "The Somalis are also suffering from lack of strong community leadership. They're just not there. I haven't seen any real leadership come up so far. Every Somali community organization you come across are manned by an old man or an old woman, and all they do is to interpret for their clients and no more. So there is a need for strong and visionary community leadership that advocates the interests and aspirations of the Somali community in general, and the up-coming generation in particular."

Fifth, Dr. Guuleed believes that, despite contrary opinions, many young Somali people are succeeding with their lives and are positively contributing to society: "People see both negative and positive in the Somali community. Me, in the environment where I am and what my friends tell me, I see positive in the Somali people. ... I know plenty of Somali people who're doing PhDs; I know many in university; I know Somali lecturers in university. It is there; it is just that people don't see it. ... I finished university 4 or 5 years ago. At the time, when I was at university we had a Somali Students Association, and the membership was above 200 people. If all these people

who were at university then graduated and got into the labour markets, plus all those who would have graduated each and every year after that, you'd have a huge amount of people out there who'd have succeeded with their lives."

I pursued this argument with Dr. Guuleed to ask him several more questions about the number of young Somali medical graduates trained in the UK that he is aware of.

Q: You said, in your experience, there are a number of Somali doctors?

A: Yes, there are a number of Somali doctors; there are lots of medical students.

Q: You said 'lots'?

A: Yes, lots of Somali medical students and some doctors.

Q: The 'some doctors', we're not talking about the old medical doctors who came from Somalia?

A: No, I am talking about people who grew up in this country like myself and have gone to medical schools in this country.

Q: Do we have figures for this! Roughly, how many are we talking about?

A: I know three doctors who've been trained like me in this country. The ones who're going to come out of medical schools in this country are lots.

Q: Lots of medical students! How many would you say, roughly, are coming out of medical schools in the UK?

A: About to graduate, 10-15. Obviously, I was in the first group of Somali students to graduate from medical school because it takes many years, about 6 years, to graduate, and we've only been here since the 1990s.

Guuleed defines success as having a job and not merely going to university. What is important is that children are engaged in activity as work, he says, and calls on parents to re-examine their inappropriate expectations: "I think success for a young Somali male in this country is someone who has a stable life. When I speak to parents ... couple of times I've been asked to speak to the children by a Somali community project in Camden, I used to say to them: "Do whatever you want to do in life, and not everyone has to go

to university". So in Somalia success means going to university, but in this country success means having a stable job. I think being a plumber is 100 times better than being an IT person who hasn't got a job. Someone goes to university and has a degree in IT but doesn't have a job. That person is not successful as compared to someone who at the age of 18 went to college and did two years plumbing course and now has a stable job and a stable family. That (the latter) person is successful. So I think to have a stable job, whatever that job is really doesn't matter, is important. I think Somali parents have inappropriate expectations of their children becoming a doctor or an engineer, that is not the only way to success."

In Guuleed's view, Somali girls are more successful than Somali boys. He attributes this partly to Somali culture and upbringing: "Somali girls are a lot more successful than Somali boys because Somali girls, in terms of our culture, are more under control than boys. If a 15 year old boy wants to go out and play football, the mother doesn't care about him. In fact if you ask her 'where is your son?', she wouldn't know about it. They know exactly where their daughters are every single minute of the day. So because the daughter is so much more supervised, they are more likely to be successful than the boys who have less supervision. ... My personal opinion is that before they reach 18, girls are under pressure from families not to do anything bad so they have more time at home. Because they have more time at home and they don't want to be in the kitchen all the time, they will start studying. So they have a lot more time to study. That is why girls attain better academic grades than boys. By the time they reach 18, they have two choices: to either get married, or to go to university. They all go to university; they've clear choices. Girls are doing very well because they're hard working but also the opportunity is such that they're (girls) bound to be successful as opposed to boys. Because no one's going to tell off a boy; if he's at home, he's watching TV and playing games on play station. Otherwise, he's outside. When he's 18, mothers will say 'oh, I'd rather he stays at home playing games than go out and get into trouble'. So the boy is let off easily and will continue playing and wasting his time. But the girls are

in a position whereby they use their time productively to study and apply themselves. ... I also find that Somali girls are more Somali (more orientated towards Somali identity) than boys. They wear their headscarf, and by that they already have the external Somali appearance. And may be they tell themselves that they need to act accordingly. I also find them to be more observant, in religious terms, than the boys. The way Somali boys dress, and all their mannerisms are no different to the way other young black men dress whereas the girls (Somali girls) are separate from others in their external appearance."

Sixth, a criticism perhaps too polemically stated, Guuleed posits the idea that the Somalis are a group of people with innate negativity, and that this pattern of negative thinking determines what they feel about their lives in the UK: "In a general way, the Somalis are taken to negative explanations. If you go talk to them, they'll say things like: "*Wallaahi* [I swear on God], I have never seen a Somali doctor or a Somali engineer or Lawyer". They're just taken to the negative, but the truth is all such Somali professionals exist in this country. In terms of information, they'll always tell you the negative: "a Somali youth has been stabbed in that area or in this area". ... Somali people are not easy. They are very cynical people. They'll always give you the negative side of things. They never see the positive aspects of life."

I asked Guuleed why does he think the way Somalis thought about their situation in the UK was negative, if indeed that is what happens. And this is what he said: "Obviously, if you're unemployed and you don't have a job, and you don't go to university, you don't meet successful people. You don't come across success so your point of view becomes negative. ... I read a book by an old English writer called Richard Burton. He said if you go to the countryside in Somalia, the first thing people will ask you is: "Is it peace?" because of their constant conflict. Laughter ... and that is how the negative outlooks come about. The parents transmit this to their children, and the children live by it. (On a personal level) I try to act as role model for young

Somali people wherever I meet them, telling them that they can become doctors like me if they work hard and believe in themselves.”

Indeed the idea of success through hard work permeates every sentence of Guuleed’s lengthy interview transcripts. Such is his advice to young people still at school: “If you put in the effort and do what you have to do to learn, then you will succeed at school and I think no one can stop you.”

EXYP.2

Jidhaan’s story

I first met Jidhaan through a friend who helped him out when he came to the mosque, ‘down-and-out in need of a meal’. The friend was surprised at how amiable and polite the young man had seemed, but also how his life was ruined by addiction, hopelessness and despair. His conclusion was that Jidhaan was a ‘victim of circumstance’. When I saw Jidhaan the following week, I found him to be a pleasant and likeable young man. He agreed to my request for an interview. He was in fact far too friendly and has agreed to come to my place for the interviewing.

On the evening of March 10th 2009, I collected Jidhaan along with the friend who arranged our meeting from a Somali Coffee Shop in North London. I took them both to my place where the interview was conducted. The session was tape-recorded and lasted for about 42 minutes. Unlike most other young people interviewed, Jidhaan elected to speak Somali throughout. Despite living most of his life in the UK, he was clearly more at ease in his native tongue than English.

While he had made himself clear, I thought some of the details about his resume didn’t entirely add up. Also statements he made about criminal convictions and terms of imprisonment he served weren’t very clear at all.

Therefore, I met Jidhaan again briefly on the 3rd of December 2009 partly to ask him to clear these up, but also to update myself on his situation. In interviews, Jidhaan spoke mostly in the third person. This does not, in any way, devalue his contribution. Merely that his account does not have a first person feel to it. One more observation I will make is that there was no one to corroborate or contradict Jidhaan's statements because he declined my request to contact his family for their side of the story. What follows is a unified account of the information he gave me on both occasions.

At 25 years of age, Jidhaan is neither working nor learning. He got involved in street life shortly after arrival when he fell in with a wrong crowd of friends at school. He then led a life of alcohol, drugs and crime, he says, but he now learned from the mistakes of the past.

Jidhaan arrived in London at the age of 9 in 1993. He was brought over by an older sister who already had residence status in the UK. He says he never saw his mum or dad, and was initially (before the age of 9) raised by his grandmother. Because of the incessant wars in Somalia, the grandmother later fled to Kenya where she 'died of natural causes'.

Within 6 months of arrival, Jidhaan became disillusioned with school and dropped out altogether. Just idly walking the streets and selling drugs became his social vocation. Here is Jidhaan on his rejection of school and the starting point of his involvement in street crime: "After we arrived, I went to school. Very soon I started having problems ... [Somali] children will find it difficult to learn because English is not their language. Their first language is Somali, and they learn English at school. ... There was no one at home to help me with homework. My sister couldn't help because she was never schooled herself. Also there was some misunderstanding with my sister. Having been at school for six months, I found it very difficult and decided to give up. I liked to play truant, hang in the streets, rob people, smoke hashish, and drink alcohol."

It all started when he fell in with some friends at school, and got involved in street life. They'd meet at school, and then do a bunk: hanging out, selling drugs and smoking cannabis. Speaking in the third person, Jidhaan recounts how his life of alcohol, drugs and crime started: "If your mum can't give you £5 or £3 to buy a meal, sweets or other things after school, you get angry. You see other children having some spending money. Someone may even have £20 spending money. That child, let's call him Tom or Jamie, says to you then 'Mohamed, come with me 'cause I've got £20. Let me buy you lunch today'. Tomorrow, you've no money. You talk to your mum and say 'mum, could I have some pocket money' and she says 'I have no money to spare. I've got this little *Ceyr* (benefit money) and I have nothing to give you'. She will then say to you, 'it is up to you if you want to go to school or not. It is up to you if you want to learn or not, but I have no money to give you'. The child goes to school feeling really pissed at his mum's refusal to give him money. He then sees another child with even more money, and who is also truanting from school. This other child is also known to Mohamed so he says to Mohamed: 'Hey Mohamed: what are you doing at school today?' He gives Mohamed £20 and tells 'to get a meal'. The boy also invites Mohamed to come with him, saying 'if you come with me, I give you £30 and we can also have girls. You won't do anything; you just come with me'. The boy then takes Mohamed along; he gives him £30 or so and they go together for the rest of the day in what Mohamed thinks would be an afternoon of joy and pleasure. It won't be a joy and pleasure; rather it spells the end of Mohamed's school career. Tomorrow, they do the same. Mohamed gets hooked on this, and starts asking for money. Then the boy says to Mohamed: "well, I can't just give you money. I work for it by robbing people. You do it, and you'll get the money". Mohamed starts robbing people; gets caught, and then ends up in prison."

Jidhaan runs away from home 'because of problems with his sister'. He doesn't say what these problems were, but hints at issues such as 'cultural conflict', his failing or dropping out of school and the lack of help from her at home as the main reasons for his leaving: "The Somali parent has to do

his own things to be able to survive. Their own problems got the better of them, so they can't help anyone. Besides, these children don't share a culture with them. The mother has no money even if she wanted to help the child with extra lessons. ... The child is angered by this turn of events. He then runs away from school and ends up in the street."

I asked Jidhaan about the issue of 'culture conflict' which he raised, and this is what he said: "Alcohol is *haram* (forbidden) from a Somali and Muslim perspective. When I came into this country, I thought hashish was good because every culture was using it, be it Jamaicans, White people or others. I was warned about alcohol from a religious side when I was young and I knew about that, but nobody said anything about hashish to me so I started smoking it. When my sister saw me smoke it, she started saying to me that I should stop it because it is not good. At that point, I left my sister."

We've only got Jidhaan's version of course, and it is difficult to say without talking to the sister! But could it also be that he was kicked out by the sister trying to protect her children? I understand that she had younger children of her own at the time. Would she not be concerned about the inevitable flow of drugs from Jidhaan to her children? And would that not constitute grounds for expelling him? This doesn't explain what happened. It is just a thought.

At the age of 13, Jidhaan was removed from his sister's care and was placed with foster parents by social services. This was a Jamaican household headed by a female which, as Jidhaan himself claims, was broad-minded and tolerant of his drug taking. He stayed with this family until he reached the age of 19 at which time he 'stopped taking drugs'. The latter was inspired by a friend's sudden death. I have put 'stopped taking drugs' in inverted commas because although he claims to have stopped using drugs, I am still inclined to refuse to accept his statement as truthful.

Jidhaan had too many problems to be turned around by foster parents. Even as he lived in their care, he committed street robberies and sold drugs for money. There was no going back to education. He has been stabbed once on the butt when a fight broke out because he and friends were in another gang's territory. The picture painted is that of glorified and glamorised idle youth culture with their daily struggles, daily fears, the constant looking over your shoulder because of gang fights, and a life of alcohol, *Khat*, drugs and crime. Here is Jidhaan narrating his own experience of Somali young people's lives, and talking in the third person perhaps to obscure his role in it: "Somali kids don't get up in the morning; they are asleep. They don't go to school or college. They are called 'hasslers' (sic). Each one of them is a vagrant. When he wakes up from asleep, he starts wandering from place to place. Each person is thinking how can they can get or make some money. I know all of them by sight. They're divided into groups, and I used to belong to one of their groups. I know what they are all up to, but I no longer take part in what they do now. ... Every night after 9 p.m., groups of rowdy Somali youths, behaving like vampires, fill up the streets. They consume a lot of alcohol causing trouble and disorder in the streets. They harass or attack people, and then the police have to act because it is their job to keep the peace. Somali children are too much of a problem for the police, especially at night. ... Some of them sell drugs in the city. Others are into credit cards; tickets; and things like that. They all act illegally. They are the main group trading in these things, all the thieving throughout the city, and so on. The Somalis are the people doing them, especially those under 25 are engaged in this. They work for other people, big people. ... West London, it is only Somalis who do it (selling drugs). North London, the Jamaicans are here in big numbers but soon, in a year or two down the road, the Somalis will outdo them. ... There are Somali girls who are procured by pimps as prostitutes. In south London, girls are mixed with the boys who sell drugs. And all of them, 100%, consume *Khat*. And in the night time, they drink ENJ brandy."

Jidhaan sees the gang fights his Somali friends get involved as a way of building status, gaining a reputation, and earning respect from other ethnic groups: "I remember a time when anyone who sees me in the street, black or white, would go after me simply because I am Somali. The black boys would set about young Somali people. Nobody knew where we came from, Europe or Africa. So we had to introduce ourselves to the world, hit back and beat these people, including the blacks. Now we are respected by the blacks here in North London more than anywhere else in London. In other areas of London, you (as a Somali young person) will be robbed by other groups. But in here, north London, you will not be because of what the Somalis did in here. Many black and Turkish people were attacked, and some of them even knifed, by Somali boys so they know that we can fight them and that is why they respect us. We are doing this so that we can all live in peace. We have a saying in Somali: 'you make war to get peace'."

But the story takes a strange twist when the Somalis fight it out among themselves. Somali on Somali gang fighting hit the headlines recently when a boy was murdered in Camden. It was said that the boy, Mahir Osman - an 18-year-old mechanical engineering Somali student who was not known to be a gang member, was stabbed to death during an attack by 40 youths. How would Jidhaan explain this phenomenon? His answer: "The Somalis fight each other. They don't like and are hostile to each other. The reason for this is because of the drugs trade that they're involved. Each group wants to carve out its own territory and if another group violates their territory, then they'll fight them. The fights between the Camden kids and those from Tottenham was all about drugs (with the unwritten code), "you can't sell drugs in my own area because I am here to sell it". These fights had nothing to do with clans or any other Somali-to-Somali issues."

Jidhaan says that he had been imprisoned twice. On the first occasion, he was arrested for his involvement in a fight 'while carrying a knife'. He doesn't say whether a stabbing had occurred in the fight or not, but tells me that he was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. He was jailed at Her

Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Feltham where he spent two years of his 4 year sentence, and was released on licence. On the second occasion, he says he was arrested for vehicle theft. He then goes on to say that he was a passenger in the vehicle when it was stopped by the police. He was given a 3 month jail term, and was sent to Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Aylesbury. He says he can't remember the dates of these custodial sentences but the last time he was in prison was in 2001, when he got arrested for the vehicle theft.

Here is Jidhaan talking about his experiences in prison, how young Somali people become hooked on crime following their detention and the consequent damage to their lives: "If a young Somali person gets into prison, the black youth in the cell next to yours will ask you 'why are you here?'. In the prison, you only survive if you act like or pretend to be tough, and young Somali people like to brag. So the Somali, who may be in there for a petty crime, would boast to say 'me, I know so and so. I know this; I know that. So and so did this; so and so did that, and the blahs'. Truth is, he doesn't know any of that; he's merely boasting. So the real person, a black boy involved in these things or his brother who is sitting in the cell next to him, hears this and hails the Somali boy. He then asks him if the Somali boy can do few things when he gets out. The Somali boy then says 'okay, I'll do them'. Then the black boy says to him 'when you get out of here; go to my brother/friend; his name is so and so, and tell him that I sent you'. So when the Somali boy comes out, he calls his friend – his partner in crime that wasn't arrested, and says to him "you man; I have got a line for us. I met Dwain or Leon in prison and he asked me to get in touch with this guy. Can we go to see him?". His friend then says "What do you mean 'can we go see him' man? Let us go get the stuff from the man'. They go to the man and get the stuff (drugs) from him. They sell and won't even share the proceeds with the owner (the man from whom they collected) for s starter. The Somali boy, the bigger crook who didn't go down last time, tells his other Somali friend: "don't be a chicken man; we're not going to give him nothing, and if he says

a word I am gonna beat him up'. That is why you've more Somali boys doing this (selling drugs) in South London than the other black boys."

According to Jidhaan, young Somali people face many problems when they come out of prison and there is no help available to them. He contrasts this with other community groups who, he says, provide much needed help to rehabilitate their troubled young people after leaving prison: "Let us take the case of other (non-Somali) people. If a child runs away from school and ends up in the street or goes to prison and comes out, he'll get help. This help will be in the form of accommodation, going back to school or college, help with job search, and with his overall getting back into the community again. If a Somali young person comes out of prison, there is no one helping him. There is no community organized to help with his learning or gaining qualifications, skills or jobs. In the prison, you gain qualifications. Once they come out, Somali young people have no way of utilizing those qualifications they gained from prison. They have no social clubs to join. After a few days being out of prison, he forgets all about it and then gets back to the same old problems. ... They've no help in terms of community resources and the parents are ignorant so they can't help anyone. The system they knew back home in Somalia and the system in this country are two different ones. That was Somalia and this is England, one of the most complex societies in the world."

One of Jidhaan's other comments had to do with young Somali people, including some old friends, increasingly becoming mentally ill and being sectioned under the Mental Health Act. These mental illnesses, in his view, 'are thought to have been drug induced': "I know of many young males, at least 10-15 here in North London alone and all aged under 30, who were hospitalized for mental health problems arising from their drug and alcohol addictions."

Jidhaan makes these claims about educational qualifications and employment history. He says that he has 'GNVQ qualifications in Maths,

English and IT'. He also tells me that he had worked three times: once at McDonald's; another time in a warehouse; and the last time at a Tesco store in ... [an area of North West London]. I asked him what was the job in Tesco, for how long did he do it, and why did he leave? He said he worked at 'Tesco Customer Services' for three years. His answer for leaving: "I got sick and tired of the job, but I am now looking for a job as a driver". I asked him if he has a driving licence, and he replied 'yes'. I must say here that there is no way of corroborating these claims because Jidhaan wouldn't let me talk to those who knew him up-close.

When I first met Jidhaan at the beginning of March 2009, he was unemployed and told me that he was looking for a job. He said the same thing again when I saw him last week, 3rd of Dec. 2009. I have a hunch, and the friend at the mosque agrees that Jidhaan had remained disengaged and unemployed ever since he left care at the age of 19. He is in fact of no fixed abode. How likely is it that his position will change anytime soon? I have no answer to this question.

APPENDIX C
Profile of Somali Refugees and their Children
A Home-Interview Schedule for Parents
June/July 1997

Thank you for being willing to take part in an interview about "Somali children in British schools". In this interview, I would like to obtain some information about yourselves and your family's experiences in the UK. I also want to know about your child's (name the child) school and out-of-school experience, and your expectations for his/her future. If you feel that a question impinges on your privacy, then feel free not to answer it. Your answers should relate to (name the child). I can confirm to you that the research related to the schedule guarantees anonymity for the family. You can, therefore, rest assured that you will remain completely anonymous and no records of the interview, with your name on, will be kept or shown to anybody else.

Preliminaries:

1. Date of Interview _____

2. Who was interviewed?

Mother _____

Father _____

Other (specify) _____

I. Child's Family Background:

3. Name of Child _____

4. Sex of Child _____ F _____ M _____

5. Date of Birth of Child _____

6. Home Address _____

7. Marital status of parents

Married _____

Divorced _____

Separated _____

Widowed _____

Other _____

8. How many persons currently live in your household?

Adults

Children

9. What educational level did the parents reach?

	Father	Mother
University education	5	5
College	4	4
Secondary school	3	3
Primary school	2	2
None	1	1

10. What work did the father have before coming to the UK?

- 1 job requiring university degree
- 2 job requiring college training
- 3 job requiring secondary education
- 4 job requiring primary education
- 5 job requiring no education
- 6 no job

Name job: _____

11. What job does the father have now?

- 1 job requiring university degree
- 2 job requiring college training
- 3 job requiring secondary education
- 4 job requiring primary education
- 5 job requiring no education
- 6 no job

Name job: _____

12. What work did the mother have before coming into the UK?

- 1 job requiring university degree
- 2 job requiring college training
- 3 job requiring secondary education
- 4 job requiring primary education
- 5 job requiring no education
- 6 housewife

Name job: _____

13. What job does the mother have now?

- 1 job requiring university degree
- 2 job requiring college training
- 3 job requiring secondary education

- 4 job requiring primary education
 5 job requiring no education
 6 no job

Name job: _____

14. In which country was the mother, father and X born?

Father	Mother	Child
_____	_____	_____

15. When did the parents and the child arrive in the UK?

Father	Mother	Child
_____	_____	_____

16. Has your family been affected by the civil war in Somalia?

Yes ☐ No ☐

16a. If yes, what happened? _____

17. Has X been personally affected by the war in Somalia?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17a. If yes, has your child suffered from any of the following war traumas?

Yes ☐ No ☐

physical injuries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
torture and		
imprisonment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
exposure to shelling or		
combat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
displacement and		
homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bereavement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
separation from parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
witnessing violent acts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
involvement in the hostilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
extreme deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
education disruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other answer (specify):	_____	

18. How does that presently affect X's life in the UK?

II. Language, Bilingualism and Culture:

19. Do the parents speak English?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Father ☐ ☐

Mother ☐ ☐

20. What language is generally spoken in the home? _____

21. Do you think the children need to learn how to write Somali?

Yes ☐ No ☐

21a. Can you explain why? _____

22. Would you say the Somalis have a culture and tradition that are unique to them?

Yes ☐ No ☐

23. If yes, can you give me examples of what you regard are the core culture and traditions of the Somalis? _____

24. How important is it for you that your children maintain these cultural/traditional examples that you have just mentioned?

Very important 1

Important 2

Somewhat important 3

Not really important 4

Unimportant 5

Don't know or don't care 6

other answer (specify): _____

III. Experiences of Family in the UK:

25. How well would you say you are adapting to your new life in Britain?

Very well adapting 1

reasonably adapting 2

somewhat adapting 3

hardly adapting 4

not at all adapting 5

don't know or don't care 6

other answer (specify): _____

26. How well would you say is X adapting to his/her new life in this country?

Very well adapting 1

reasonably adapting 2

somewhat adapting 3
 hardly adapting 4
 not at all adapting 5
 don't know or don't care 6
 other answer (specify): _____

27. Has any member of your family recently experienced:

Yes ☐ No ☐

Racist attack ☐ ☐
 Discrimination ☐ ☐
 other hostile acts ☐ ☐
 (specify): _____

27a. If yes, what happened?

28. What were the most difficult experiences the family had since arriving in the UK?

29. Who did help you most towards resolving these problems?

The local authority ☐
 Somali community workers ☐
 Your own relatives ☐
 others ☐

(Please specify) _____

30. On balance, how do you see the future of your children in this country?

Very bright 1
 reasonably bright 2
 less than bright 3
 not at all bright 4
 bleak 5
 don't know or don't care 6
 other answer (specify): _____

31. If peace should ever return, do you wish to go back and live in Somalia?

Yes ☐ No ☐

31a. Can you explain why? _____

IV. Family and the School:

32. How important is it that you provide your children with a good education?

- Very important 1
- Important 2
- Somewhat important 3
- Not really important 4
- Unimportant 5
- Don't know or don't care 6

other answer (specify): _____

33. School attended by child _____

34. How satisfied would you say you are with the school that X attends?

- Very satisfied 1
- reasonably satisfied 2
- not really satisfied 3
- very dissatisfied 4
- don't know or don't care 5

other answer (specify): _____

35. From what you know, how would you rate X's performance at school of the following subjects (either, very good (1), good (2), don't know (3), poor (4), very poor (5))?

	very good	good	don't know	poor	very poor
(a) Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
(b) Reading	1	2	3	4	5
(c) Writing	1	2	3	4	5
(d) Behaviour at school	1	2	3	4	5
(e) School attendance	1	2	3	4	5

[In connection with the above question, would it be possible to show me some of X's recent school?]

36. How much education would you really like X to receive if at all possible?

- 1 Postgraduate education (a higher degree)
- 2 graduate from university (a first degree)
- 3 at least some university
- 4 secondary education plus college or some other professional training
- 5 finish secondary school or, as much as possible
- 6 leave school as soon as possible

Other answer: _____

37. What kind of job would you like X to have when he/she grows up, if at all possible?

- 1 job requiring postgraduate education or long period at university
(Doctor, dentist, lawyer, scientist, university lecturer, etc.)
- 2 job requiring university degree (high school teacher, architect,
public servant, engineer, etc.)
- 3 job requiring secondary school graduation and some college training
(Nurse, primary school teacher, journalist, etc.)
- 4 job requiring the completion of secondary school
- 5 job requiring some secondary school education
- 6 job requiring little education, or parents state that 'it is up
to the child to decide,' or 'I don't care'

Name the job desired: _____

38. Did X have any problems at school recently?

Yes ☐ No ☐

38a. If yes, can you say what these were? _____

V. Child's social competence, vocational & religious experience:

39. Please list the sports and ^{hobbies} ~~hobbies~~ your child most likes to take part in. For example: swimming, football, basketball, snooker, bike riding, books, crafts, singing, etc. (Do not include Tv and/or computer games).

☐ none

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

40. Please list any organizations, clubs, teams, or groups your child belongs to.

☐ None

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

41. Please list any jobs or chores your child has. For example: paper route, babysitting, making bed, etc.

☐ None

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

42. Compared to other children of his/her age, how well does your child:

	Worse	About the same	Better
a. Get along with his/her brothers and sisters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- b. Get along with other children? ☐ ☐ ☐
- c. Behave with his/her parents? ☐ ☐ ☐
- d. Play and work by himself/herself? ☐ ☐ ☐

43. Does X go to a Mosque and/or Koranic school (Dugsi Quran)?

Yes ☐ No ☐
 Mosque ☐ ☐
 Koranic School ☐ ☐

44. How often does X go to a Mosque and/or Koranic School (Dugsi Quran)?

Mosque ☐
 Koranic
 School ☐

- everyday 1
 several times a week 2
 once a week 3
 once or twice
 a month 4
 infrequently 5
 Never, or no 6

45. Thank you very much for helping me and giving up your time. Can I finally ask you if you think there are other aspects of X's work (or problems which he/she may have encountered) that have not been covered in this interview? _____

APPENDIX D

Follow-up interviews with parents

PRELIMINARIES

Parent interviewed _____

Name _____

Age _____

Marital status _____

Occupation _____

Place of interview _____

Date of interview _____

Interview no. _____

Start Tape Recording Here

IMMIGRATION*

* Questions about immigration will only be asked of new parents who did not take part in the first fieldwork of 1997.

1. In which country were you and your husband/wife born?

2. What educational level did you and your husband/wife reach before coming to the UK?

3. What jobs did you and your husband/wife have before coming to the UK?

4. When did you immigrate to the United Kingdom?

5. Did your family come all together at the same time? [if not, collect history]

6. What are some of the reasons why your family decided to leave Somalia and come to the United Kingdom?

7a. Is life here in the UK different than what you expected?

YES

NO

7b. If so, in what ways?

8. What do you like most about living here?

9. What do you like least?

11. What goals do you have for yourself in this country?

12. What is your legal status in the UK? (Asylum seeker? ILR? British Citizen? Something else?)

13. What does it mean to be living in the UK with your status as above?

CHANGES IN FAMILY

First of all, I would like to ask you about any changes to your family since my first interview with you back in 1997.

14. Have there been any changes about who lives with you and your children? For example, has a baby born? Have other relatives moved in? Has someone died? Have you separated from a spouse?

YES NO

14b. What kinds of changes?

15. In total, how many people live regularly or most of the time in your household now?

16. Has your family moved since my interviews with you in 1997? If yes, how many times?

17. Has any of your children formed their own families? If yes, how many of your children have got their own families?

18. You will remember me asking you at the time specifically about _____ (named child about whom I interviewed the parent in 1997), can you briefly share with us what in particular has happened to him/her since 1997?

RAISING CHILDREN IN THE UK

You may recall that in the first interview, I asked you about your experiences of life in the UK and your impressions of how your children were faring in society. I would like to revisit this conversation.

19. In what ways is raising children in the UK different from raising them in Somalia?

20. Some parents say their relationship with their children changed since coming to the UK. Has that happened in your family? And if so, in what ways has your relationship with your children changed?

21. What do you think are the positive aspects of raising children in the UK?

22. What do you think are the negative aspects of raising children in the UK?

23. What do you think do families from Somalia (like yours) worry about most in raising a girl in the UK?

24. What do you think they worry about most when it comes to raising a boy in the UK?

25. In my interview with you back in 1997 you told me that you wanted your children to be raised according to the customs of your own country, Somalia. Tell me what happened?

26. Do you have trouble communicating with your children due to language problems, either because they do not speak enough Somali language or you don't speak enough English? If so, can you tell us what happens?

27. Some parents are worried that their children's friends are having a bad influence on them. Did you have such worries? If so, what issues were you concerned most about?

28. Now that your children have grown up (or at least some of them have), what concerns you most about their future in the UK?

29. Overall, what were the most difficult experiences you have had so far in raising your children in the UK?

CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Now let us talk about your children's educational experiences.

30. What has been positive about your children's experience at school in the UK?

31. What was negative about their experiences at school?

32. Did you pay private tuition for any of your children to help them with their school subjects? And if so, has it helped them?

33. Has any of your children done exceptionally well at school? If so, will you share their story with us?

34. Has any of your children done exceptionally poor at school? If so, will you share their story with us?

35. Has any of your children gone to University? If so, will you share their story with us?

36. Do you expect some of your other children to go to university as well? If so, will you share their story with us?

37. I now want you to focus in particular on _____ (named child about whom I interviewed the parent in 1997), can you briefly share with us his/her experience at school?

38. Overall, what were the most difficult experiences you have had in relation to schooling your children in the UK?

CHILDREN'S WORK EXPERIENCES

Now let us talk about your children's labour market experiences.

39. What are your older children's current work situation?

40. Have some of your children found it difficult to secure a job? If so, what is the story?

41. What do you think are the key attributes that young people ought to have to be employable? (probe re: qualifications, skills, experience etc.)

42. Whose responsibility do you think it is that they develop these key attributes? (probe re: young people themselves, schools, parents, employers, others).

43. Do you think that school (compulsory – up to Year 11) together with any post 16 education they might have had would be useful in preparing your children for the realities of working life?

44. What do you think is more important for a son – getting married and having a family or finding a good job, or are both equally important?

45. What about a daughter? What do you think is more important for her – getting married and having a family or finding a good job, or are both equally important?

46. I now want you to focus in particular on _____ (named child about whom I interviewed the parent in 1997), can you briefly share with us his/her work experience to date?

47. Lastly, what would you say are the main challenges confronting young people of Somali parentage like your children to getting a good job?

FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT & RELIGION

Now I am going to ask you about relatives and friends who live in London or elsewhere in the UK.

48. Does your family get together with relatives and/or friends from Somalia on a regular basis?

49. How does that help your family, and especially your children?

50. Everyone needs help sometimes. If your family has a problem or needs help, who does the family usually go for help?

51. Does religion play a role in your life? And what would that be?

TRANSNATIONAL CONTACTS

I would like to ask you about children returning or being returned to Somalia either permanently or temporarily, or being sent abroad to another country for a period of time.

52. Some parents have returned one or more of their children back to Somalia either temporarily or permanently. Has that happened in your family? If so, can you tell us the circumstances under which this return travel has occurred, and what has been accomplished by it?

53. Some parents have sent one or more of their children abroad to a third country for a period of time. Has that happened in your family? If so, can you tell us the circumstances under which this has occurred, and what has been accomplished by it?

54a. Do you yourself hope to go back and live in Somalia were peace to return to that country?

54b. What about your children? Do you think they will stay in the UK or move to Somalia to live and work in there, if peace returns to the country?

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

I shall now ask you some questions about your hopes for the children's future.

55. People measure success in different ways. How do you define someone who is successful?

56. How do you think one can achieve success in this country?

57. Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person?

58. Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a woman as they are for a man?

59. In 1997, you said you wanted your son/daughter _____ (named child about whom I interviewed the parent in 1997) to be doing a job requiring a university level education when he/she grows up. What has become of him/her now?

60. What do you think he/she will have to do now to get the future you hoped for him/her?

© Thank you very much for your help.

APPENDIX E

Discussion guide for interviews with young people

PRELIMINARIES

Name of interviewee _____

Date of interview _____

Place of interview _____

Interview no. _____

BACKGROUND

1. Age _____

2. Sex _____

3. Marital status _____

4. Occupation _____

5a. Do you have children?

YES

NO

5b. If yes, take details of names, dates & places of birth:

6. In which country were you born?

7. If born outside the UK, how old were you when you arrived in Britain?

8. Which language would you like us to conduct this interview, Somali or English? It would, in all fairness, be better to do it in the one that you are more fluent so which one should it be? _____

Start Tape Recording Here

HOME, FAMILY, ETHNICITY & SOCIAL NETWORKS

I would first like to ask you about your home and family life, and your views about identity, spirituality, and social networks.

9. Where do you live now? (probe re: parents' home, own place, other)

10. Some young people say they'd rather continue living in their family home than move away, what is your position on this and why?

11. Do you get on well with your family?

12. Do you have trouble communicating with your parents due to language problems, either because they do not speak enough English or you don't speak enough Somali?

13. How do you identify, that is, what do you call yourself? (probe re: Somali, African, Black, Black British, or anything else?) And how important is this identity to you?

14. What percentage of your close friends are Somalis?

15. Why do you think that is?

16. Does religion play a role in your life? If so, what would that be?

17. Everyone needs help sometimes. If you have a problem or need help, who do you usually go for help?

18. Lots of things happen in families which may affect young people. Has anything happened to your family in the recent past that affected your life? (probe re: illness, separation or divorce, imprisonment, death, etc.)

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

I shall now ask you about your experiences at school, and about more recent education and training experiences you may have had.

19. Can you please tell me what was positive about your experience at school?

20. What has been negative about your experience at school?

21. Who helped you most with your homework when you needed help at home?

22. Did you receive private (i.e., paid for) tuition to help with your school subjects while you were at school? If so, briefly tell us how this operated and any educational benefits you accrued from it?

23. Route taken post 16: What route have you taken for education/training post 16? And why?

24. What qualifications have you achieved so far? Did you achieve what you expected to achieve? Would you say you've over-achieved, or under-achieved?

JOBS & WORK EXPERIENCE

I now want to ask you about jobs and employment experience.

25. What is your current work/employment situation?

26. If not working, have you had a job before?

YES

NO

27. If you are working, can you tell us about the nature of the job, how you got it, length of employment, experience gained, and your long-term goals vis-à-vis your current job?

28. If no, what problems do you in general experience in relation to finding work?

29. What attributes do you think are employers looking for when they recruit young people?

30. What do you think are the key attributes that you can offer to an employer?
(probe re: qualifications, skills, experience)

31. What do you think is more important for a young person like you – getting married and having a family or finding a good job, or are both equally important? And why?

32. Some young people say that, when looking for work, a person should find a job near his/her parents even if it means losing a better job somewhere else. What is your view on this?

33. What do you think are the main problems facing young Somali immigrant people like yourself in finding a job? And how could these be overcome?

34. Can I ask if you think there is any aspect of your experience of being in work or out of work that has not been covered in this section?

TRANSNATIONAL CONTACTS

Now I am going to ask you about you or any of your siblings returning (or being returned) to Somalia or being sent abroad to another country for a period of time, after your family immigrated to the UK.

35. Some parents have returned one or more of their children back to Somalia, or to a third country abroad, either temporarily or permanently. Has that happened in your family? If so, Can you tell us the circumstances under which this return travel has occurred, and what has been accomplished by it?

36. Some parents have sent one or more of their children abroad to a third country for a period of time. Has that happened in your family? If so, can you tell us the circumstances under which this has occurred, and what has been accomplished by it?

37. Do you keep up with events and the political situation in Somalia? Briefly, what do you think is happening there?

38. If peace were to return to Somalia, do you think you will want to go back to live and work in there or would you rather stay in the UK?

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

I shall now ask you some questions about your hopes and expectations for the future.

39. People measure success in different ways. How would you define success for someone of your age?

40. How do you think one can achieve success in this country?

41. Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a person from Somalia as they are for a British person?

42. Do you think the chances of success in the UK are the same for a woman as they are for a male person?

43. Some people say education will help you find a good job. Others say, it does not matter much these days whether you're educated highly or not. What do you think?

44. What would you like to be doing in 10 years time?

45. And what do you think you will have to do now to get what you just said you'd want to be doing in 10 years time?

© Many thanks for your help, and good luck with your future career.